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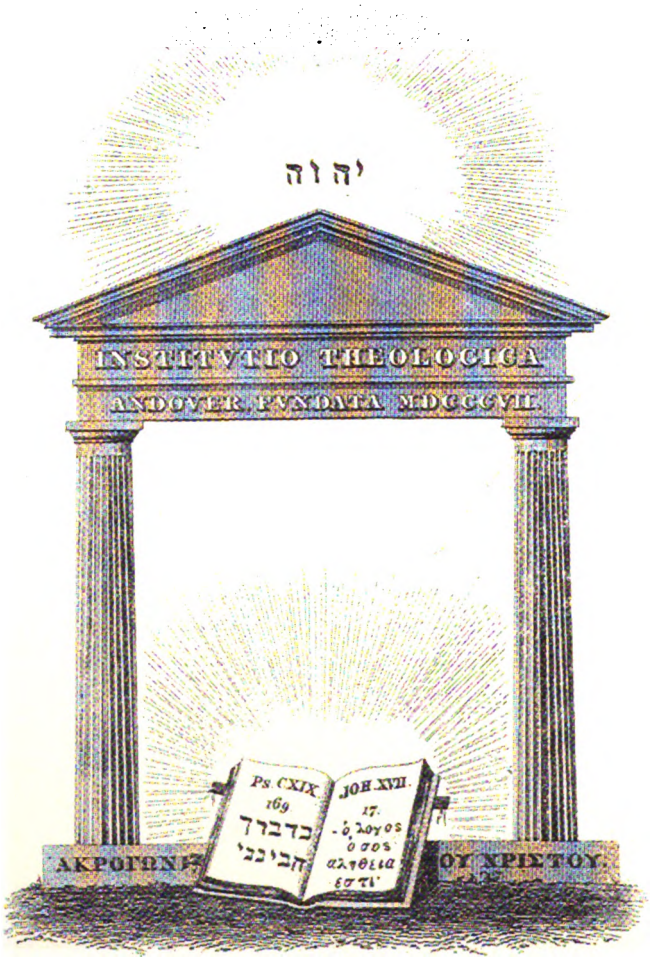

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THE

WORKS

OF

DR. JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

WITH THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THOS. BIRCH, M. A.

ALSO,

A COPIOUS INDEX, AND THE TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE CAREFULLY COMPARED.

IN TEN VOLUMES.—VOL. X.

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SERMONS.

SERMON CCXLV.

THE GROUNDS OF BAD MEN'S ENMITY TO THE TRUTH.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.—JOHN iii. 20.

AMONG all the advantages which God hath afforded mankind, to conduct them to eternal happiness, the light of the Christian religion is incomparably the greatest; which makes it the greater wonder, that, at its first appearing in the world, it should meet with such unkind entertainment, and so fierce and violent an opposition. Of all the blessings of nature, light is the most welcome and pleasant; and surely to the mind of man, rightly disposed, truth is as agreeable and delightful, as it is to the eye to behold the sun; and yet we find, that when the most glorious Light that ever the world saw visited mankind, and Truth itself was incarnate, and came down from heaven to dwell amongst us, it was so far from being welcomed by the world, that it was treated with all imaginable rudeness, and was opposed by the Jews, with as much fierceness and rage, as if an enemy had invaded their country, with a design to take away their place and nation. No sooner did

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the Son of God appear, and begin to send forth his light and truth among them, by the public preaching of his doctrine, but the teachers and rulers among the Jews rose up against him as a common enemy, and were never quiet till they had taken him out of the way, and by this means, as they thought, quite extinguished that light.

Now what can we imagine should be the reason of all this, that a person who gave such clear evidence that he came from God, that a doctrine which carries such clear evidence of its Divine original, should be rejected with so much indignation and scorn? that light and truth, which are so agreeable to mankind, and so universally welcome, should be so disdainfully repulsed? What account can be given of it, but that which our Saviour here gives in the text? "Light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light; because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved, (or discovered; for so the word likewise signifies, and may very fitly be so rendered in this place;) but (as it follows) he that doeth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God;" that is, that they are of a Divine stamp and original. In which words our Saviour represents to us the different disposition and carriage of good and bad men, as to the receiving or rejecting of truth, when it is offered to them: they that are wicked and worldly are enemies to truth, because they have designs contrary to it. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." And on the contrary, a good man, "he that doeth the truth," and sincerely prac-

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tises what he knows, " cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest."

I shall not need to handle these distinctly, because in speaking to one, the contrary will sufficiently appear. That therefore which I shall speak to at this time, shall be the former of these, viz. The enmity of bad men, and of those who carry on ill designs to the truth, together with the causes and reasons of it. " Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered." Here our Saviour's doctrine (as I have shewn in the three last discourses) is represented to us by the metaphor of light, because it was so clear a revelation of the will of God, and our duty, and carried in it so much evidence of its divinity; it being the chief property of light to discover itself and other things. So that those great and important truths contained in our Saviour's doctrine, are the light here spoken of, and which men of bad designs and practices are said to hate and decline: " Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

In which words two things offer themselves to our consideration:

First, The enmity of wicked men to the truth: " Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light."

Secondly, The ground or reason of this enmity: " Lest his deeds should be discovered."

First, The enmity of wicked men to the truth: " Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." Men of ill designs and practices hate the light, and because they hate it they shun it and flee from it; " neither cometh he to the light." Now this enmity

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to truth appears principally in these two things; in their resistance, and in their persecution of it.

1. In their opposition and resistance of it. A bad man is not only averse from the entertainment of it, and loath to admit it, but thinks himself concerned to resist it. Thus the Jews opposed those Divine truths which our Saviour declared to them; they did not only refuse to receive them, but they set themselves to confute them, and by all means to blast the credit of them, and to charge them not only with novelty and imposture, but with a seditious design, and with blasphemous and odious consequences; they perverted every thing he said to a bad sense, and put malicious constructions upon all he did, though never so blameless and innocent. When he instructed the people, they said he was stirring them up to sedition; when he told them he was the Son of God, they made him a blasphemer for saying so; when he healed on the sabbath-day, they charged him with profaneness; when he confirmed his doctrine by miracles, the greatest and plainest that ever were wrought, they reported him a magician; when they could find no fault with many parts of his doctrine, which was so holy and excellent, that malice itself was not able to misrepresent it, or take any exception to it, they endeavoured to destroy the credit of it, by raising scandals upon him for his life; because his conversation was free and familiar, they taxed him for a wine-bibber, and a glutton; and because he accompanied with bad men, in order to the reclaiming and reforming of them, they represented him as a favourer of such persons, "a friend of publicans and sinners."

By these and such-like calumnies they endea-

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voured to disparage his doctrine, and to alienate men from it; being prejudiced against the truth themselves, they did what they could to keep others from embracing it; and, as our Saviour tells, "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering others that were going in to enter."

2. The enmity of bad men to the truth, likewise appears in their persecution of it; not only in those that propound it to them, but in all those that give entertainment to it: and this is the highest expression of enmity that can be, to be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction and extirpation of what we hate. And thus the Jews declared their enmity to the gospel. When this great light came into the world, they not only shut their eyes against it, but endeavoured to extinguish it, by persecuting the author of this doctrine, and all those that published it, and made profession of it; they persecuted our Saviour all his life, and were continually contriving mischief against him, seeking to entrap him in his words, and so render him obnoxious to the Roman government, and at last putting him to death upon a false and forged accusation; and all this out of enmity to that truth which he delivered to them from God; as he himself tells us; (John viii. 40.) "But ye now seek to kill me, a man which hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God."

But their malice did not rest here; they persecuted in like manner his disciples and followers, casting them out of their synagogues, and forbidding them to speak to the people in the name of Jesus, delivering them up to councils, and condemning them to death. Never did good men shew

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greater zeal and earnestness for the truth, than these wicked men did against it; so that had our blessed Saviour been the greatest impostor that ever was, and brought the most pernicious doctrine that ever was into the world, they could not have persecuted him with more rage and fury, and given greater testimony of their enmity against him. I pass to the

Second thing I proposed; namely, To inquire into the causes and reasons of this enmity: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered." Here is the bottom of men's malice and enmity against the truth, it lays open their evil deeds and designs; men of honest intentions are not afraid of the light, because it can do them no prejudice; it shews what they ought to do, and they have a desire to know it, that they may do it: "He that doeth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." Light is an advantage to good and virtuous actions, which the more they are seen and understood, the more they are approved and esteemed; but they that do evil, "love darkness rather than light," because they are afraid their deeds should be discovered.

And there is a twofold discovery of their actions which bad men are afraid of. They are afraid they should be discovered to themselves, because that creates trouble and uneasiness to them; and they are afraid they should be discovered to others, because that causeth shame.

1. They are afraid the evil of their actions should be discovered to themselves, because that creates guilt and trouble; men do not care to see their own faults, and to have the vileness of their

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deeds truly represented to them. And this, no doubt, was the principal reason which set the scribes and pharisees so much against our Saviour and his doctrine, because it discovered their hypocrisy to them: and how beautiful soever they appeared without, in their affected piety and formal devotion, yet, "like painted sepulchres, they were within full of uncleanness and rottenness." Those real virtues which our Saviour taught, and the practice whereof he made so necessary to the eternal happiness and salvation of men, were a severe reproof of their lives and actions, and did discover to them how defective they were in that righteousness which alone will bring men to the kingdom of God: so that his doctrine must needs be very troublesome to them, and they did not care to hear it, no more than a bad face loves to look in a true glass; they had flattered themselves before, in a conceit of their own righteousness, but when the light came, it discovered all their spots and deformities, so that they were no longer able to hide them from themselves; and this was a double trouble to them.

(1.) It robbed them of that good opinion which they had of themselves before; and it is no small vexation to a man to be put out of conceit with himself. Truth flatters no man, and therefore, it is no wonder that so many are offended at it: a good man is satisfied with himself, and so would bad men fain be too; and therefore, truth must needs be very unwelcome to them, because it attempts to deprive them of so great a satisfaction, and to chase away one of the most pleasant delusions in the world.

(2.) The discovery of men's faults fills them with trouble and guilt. Truth carries great evidence along with it, and is very convincing, and where

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men will not yield to it, and suffer themselves to be convinced by it, it gives them a great deal of disturbance; *Gravis malæ conscientiæ lux est*, says Seneca; "Light is very troublesome to a bad conscience," for it shews men their deformities whether they will or no; and when men's vices are discovered to them, they must either resolve to persist in them, or to break them off, and either of these is very grievous.

Some men are so habituated to their vices, and so strongly addicted to them by their inclination, and attached to them by their interest, that they cannot quit them without offering the greatest violence to themselves; it is like cutting off a right hand, or pulling out a right eye, as our Saviour expresses it. Now to avoid this pain and trouble, most men, though they be convinced of their faults, choose to continue in them, and yet this is full as troublesome as the other, though it is hard to convince men of it; there cannot be a more restless state than that of guilt, the stings and torment whereof are continually increased by men's practising contrary to the convictions of their own minds. Perhaps the trouble of repentance and reformation may be as great at first; but all this pain is in order to a cure, and ends in health and ease: but he who goes on in a bad course, after he is convinced of the evil of it, lays a foundation of perpetual anguish and torment, which, the longer he continues in his vices, will perpetually increase; so that it is no wonder if they that do evil hate the light, when it is every way so grievous and uneasy to them.

2. Bad men are enemies to the truth, because it discovers the evil of their actions to others, which causeth shame. The doctrine of the gospel lays

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open the faults of men, and upbraids them with their vices. Precepts of holiness and virtue are a public reproof to the corrupt manners of mankind; and men hate public reproof, because it shames them before others, and exposeth them to censure and contempt. This made the pharisees so offended with our Saviour's doctrine, because it was so severe a censure of their manners, and abated the reputation of their sanctity and devotion; it discovered them at the bottom to be very bad men; and how righteous soever they appeared outwardly, to be inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Now reputation is a tender part, which few men can endure to have touched, though never so justly; and therefore, no wonder if bad men be impatient of that truth which lays them open to the world, and do by all means endeavour to suppress and conceal it from themselves and others. Thus I have as briefly as I could, given you an account of the true ground and reason of the enmity of wicked men against the truth, because it discovers their errors and faults, both to themselves and others.

I shall only now draw two or three inferences from this discourse, by way of application, and so conclude.

I. From hence we may learn the true reason why men are so apt to reject and oppose the principles of religion, both of natural and revealed religion. By the principles of natural religion, I mean those which nature acquaints us with, as the being of God and his providence, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments after this life: by the principles of revealed religion, those which are revealed in the Holy Scriptures, especially in the gospel, which is the clearest and most perfect

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revelation of the Divine will that God ever made to the world. Now the reason why men oppose these principles, and endeavour to throw them off, is, because they are loath to be under the restraint of them; they are so many checks and fetters to men of ill designs, and bad lives, and therefore no wonder if they bite at them, and endeavour to break them off; they contradict the lusts of men, and fly in their faces when they do wickedly; they are continually pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, and therefore they would fain be rid of them: and therefore there is a plain reason why these men oppose the truth, and endeavour to baffle it; because it opposeth and affronts them in those wicked practices, in which they are resolved to continue. I do not say that all bad men fly thus high, as to endeavour to extinguish the belief of religion in themselves and others; but there are three sorts of men more especially, that think themselves concerned to promote atheism either in themselves or in others.

1. Those who are more enormously wicked, are concerned to be atheists themselves, because the principles of religion are so plainly inconsistent with their practice. This is so visible, that they cannot but see it; and therefore they must declare themselves enemies to such principles, as are so notoriously contrary to the course they live in.

2. Those who, though their lives are not so notoriously bad, have quicker understandings than the common sort of sinners; because these do sooner discern the inconsistency of these principles with their own actions; and being resolved not to reform, partly for the peace of their own minds, and partly to vindicate themselves to others, they declare war against these principles; and if they can over-

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throw them, they gain a double advantage by it. They think they shall be at more ease in their own minds, if they can but free themselves from the check and control of these principles; and indeed they would be so, if they could root them out; but nature hath planted them so deep, and rivetted them so fast, that when we have done all we can to extirpate them, they will spring up again. And then they hope also by this means to vindicate themselves to others, because they can now no longer be upbraided with the disagreement of their principles with their practice.

3. There are others, who, though they be not atheists themselves, yet from the spirit and interest of a worldly church, are concerned to promote atheism in others. And this hath been a very common practice of the factors for the church of Rome in this age: when they cannot gain men directly to their religion, they fetch a strange compass, and try to make them infidels, or sceptics, as to all religion; and then they doubt not to bring them about at last to the outward profession of their religion, which will serve their turn well enough: for when men are once unhinged from the principles of all religion, it is no hard matter for their own ease and interest to persuade them to an outward compliance with that religion which is coming in fashion, and will bring them some advantage. And this is not an uncharitable suspicion, but certain in fact and experience; that this impious method of several of the priests of the church of Rome, hath been one of the principal sources of the infidelity and scepticism of this age.

II. This is a great vindication of our religion, that it can bear the light, and is ready to submit

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itself to any impartial trial and examination: we are not afraid to expose our religion to the public view of the world, and to appeal to the judgment of mankind for the truth and reasonableness of it: truth loves to come abroad and be seen, being confident of her own native beauty and charms, of her own force and power to gain upon the minds of men: and, on the contrary, it doth justly draw a great suspicion upon any religion, if it declines the light; and nothing can render it more suspected, than for the teachers of it to make it their great care to keep people in the dark about it; or if they chance to peep into it, and to espy the defects of it, to awe them by the extremity of danger and suffering, from declaring against those errors and corruptions which they have discovered in it. I do not know two worse signs of the falsehood and corruption of any church or religion, than ignorance and an inquisition: these two are shrewder marks of a false church, than all the fifteen marks, which Bellarmine hath mustered up, are, to prove the church of Rome to be the only true Christian church. Methinks their church and ours differ like Egypt and Goshen, in the time of the plague of darkness; only in this they differ from Egypt, that God sent the plague among them, but the church of Rome affects it, and brings it upon themselves; a darkness so gross that it may be felt; and to make it more thick and palpable, they impose upon men the belief of direct nonsense, under the grave, venerable pretence of mystery, as in their doctrine of transubstantiation. And the great design of the Inquisition is to awe men from reading the Scriptures, and from searching into, and examining, the grounds of their religion, because they think they will not

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bear the test.—This is the condemnation of that church, that when light is come into the world, they love darkness rather than light, because their doctrines and their deeds are evil.

III. And lastly, This gives us the plain reason why some in the world are so careful to suppress and conceal the truth, and to lock up the knowledge of it from the people in an unknown tongue, and do so jealously guard all the avenues whereby light and knowledge should enter into them, it is because their doctrines, and designs, and deeds are evil, and they are afraid they should be discovered to be so. This is the true reason why "they love darkness rather than light;" for the church of Rome are wise enough in their generation, to understand that nothing but the darkness of their shops can hinder people from discerning the falseness of their wares; they have several things to put off to the people, which cannot bear the trial of a clear and full light. What *else* makes them conceal the word of God from men? that great light which God hath set up in the world, to be a lamp to our feet, and a lantern to our steps; it is not to keep out heresy, but light and truth: when they cannot be ignorant that God has set up this candle on purpose to enlighten the world, why do they put it under a bushel, but that they are guilty to themselves, that several of their doctrines and practices will be discovered and reproved by it?

What makes them in the face of the world to conceal from the people the second commandment in their ordinary catechisms and manuals, but lest the people should come to understand that God hath expressly forbidden the worship of images? We do not conceal those texts, "feeding sheep," and

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"upon this rock will I build my church," for fear the people should discern the pope's supremacy and infallibility in them, but are content to run the hazard of it, and let them find them there if they can.

And then, why do they mask the public service of God, and the prayers and devotions of the people, in an unknown tongue, but that they are afraid they should understand the gross superstitions and idolatry of many of them? If they mean honestly, why do they cast such a mist about their religion? why do they wrap and cover it all over in darkness, but that they are heartily afraid, that the more people understand it, the worse they will like it?

The truth is, their doctrines are evil, and "their deeds are evil," and plainly condemned almost in every page of the Bible; and therefore it is a dangerous book to be suffered in the hands of the people; and there is hardly any thing which the church of Rome contends against, with more stiffness and zeal, than letting the people have the service of God and the Holy Scriptures in a known tongue. When the office of the mass was, not many years since, by some bishops and others in France, translated into the vulgar tongue, for the benefit of the people, how did the then pope Alexander the Seventh thunder against them for it, calling them that did it sons of perdition, and condemning the thing as if it had been the wickedest thing in the world, and had directly tended to the overthrow of the Christian religion!

And then, for the use of the Holy Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, they have put that under so many locks and keys, that the greatest caution in the world is used in the permission and allowance of it to any particular person: the priest hath not power

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to do it, it is only the bishops that can grant this liberty; and they do it very rarely, and only to those of whom they are very secure, and this power since that time again revoked; so that the gospel, which before our Saviour's appearance was "a mystery, hid from ages and generations," continues so still to the common people of the church of Rome, and is under a thicker veil, more muffled and hid from the people, in an unknown tongue, than it was to the Jews, under the obscure prophecies, and dark types and shadows, of the Old Testament. So that though Christ be "read in their churches every day," as Moses was to the Jews in their synagogues, yet he hath "a veil upon his face," as Moses had. "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and neither enter in yourselves, nor suffer those that would enter to go in." The people of the church of Rome are indeed to be pitied, who are kept in ignorance against their wills; but the governing part of the church are without excuse, who, to cover their errors and corruptions, hide the Scriptures from the people, "love darkness rather than light;" this therefore is their great condemnation.

Witness the black and hellish design of this day,* such as never before entered into the heart of man, to have ruined a whole kingdom at once, in its prince and representative; and by a cruel, sudden blow, to have taken away the lives of the greatest and most considerable assembly in the world. They must needs love darkness, and hate the light, who have such designs to carry on, and such deeds of darkness to justify and make good; they have need

* Preached Nov. 5, 1684.

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to suppress, and, if possibly they can, to extinguish, not only the revealed truth of God, but even the great principles of natural religion, the belief of a God, and a judgment to come, that attempt such things.

Time was, when, in despite of the clearest evidence in the world, they did confidently deny that any such design was laid by those of their religion, but that it was a contrivance of some minister of state, who drew in a few rash and hot-headed persons of desperate fortunes into it, and then betrayed and discovered them: but when the late popish plot broke out here, then they were contented to own the gunpowder treason, because they that were executed for it, did confess it, that they might with a better colour bring themselves off from this, which was so constantly denied by those who were condemned and executed for it; but this was but a shift and artifice to blind the clear evidence of this latter conspiracy, which pressed so hard upon them: and since that, because they are afraid it is still believed, they have used all imaginable arts, and taken a great deal of pains, to wash this blackamoor; yet the negro is a negro still, and I doubt not but they are still at work, carrying on the same design, which, if God do not mercifully frustrate and disappoint, is like at last to involve this nation in great misery and confusion.

"But the Lord reigneth, therefore let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at them, the Lord shall have them in derision." There are many plots and "devices in the heart of man: but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;" and if we would but live up to the light which we enjoy,

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and adorn our reformed religion by a holy and unblamable conversation; if we would avoid those bloody and rebellious ways, which are so natural and suitable to their religion, and so contrary to ours, and so scandalous to all religion; if we would break off our sins by repentance, and put an end to our foolish differences and disputes, by returning to the ancient peace and unity of this once happy and firmly-compacted church, we have no reason yet to despair, but that God would "return to us in mercy and loving-kindness," and "think thoughts of peace towards us," and preserve the best religion in the world to us, and our posterity after us.

"Now unto him that hath delivered us so often, and so wonderfully, and doth deliver us, and we trust will still deliver us, to him be honour and glory, praise, and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen."

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SERMON CCXLVI.

TRUE LIBERTY THE RESULT OF CHRISTIANITY.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—JOHN viii. 36.

THE meaning of these words will best appear, by considering the occasion of them, which was this: Upon our Saviour's preaching to the Jews, many believed on him; whereupon he tells them, that if they continued in his doctrine, did not only yield a present assent, but firmly embraced it, and framed their life and practice according to it, then they would be his disciples indeed, and they should know the truth; they would come by degrees to a more perfect knowledge and understanding of it, "and the truth would make them free." At this expression, of being made free, they were somewhat offended; because they took themselves to be the freest people in the world: and by virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, from whom they were descended, to have many privileges and immunities conferred upon them, above the rest of mankind: (ver. 33.) "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" They took this for a great affront to them, and an insinuation that they were in slavery and bondage. But they mistook our Saviour, who did not speak of an outward and civil servitude; and yet, if their pride and conceit of themselves would have suffered them to

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consider it, it was true likewise in that sense, that they had lost their liberty, being at that time in great bondage and subjection to the Romans. But that was not the thing our Saviour meant; he spake of a spiritual servitude, which, if men were truly sensible of, is far more grievous than that of the body, and the outward man: (ver. 34, 35.) "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever:" that is, a servant hath no right to any thing, but is perfectly at the disposal of his master, being a part of his goods, which he may use as he pleaseth; but the son hath a right to the inheritance, and is, as it were, lord of the estate; and then it follows, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

In which words our Saviour seems to allude to a custom which was in some of the cities of Greece, and perhaps in other places, whereby the son and heir had a power to adopt brethren, and to give them the liberty and privilege of the family. If the Son of God set you free from this spiritual slavery, and adopt you to be his brethren, "then are you free indeed;" not only in vain opinion and conceit, as you take yourselves to be by virtue of being Abraham's children; but really and in truth, ye shall be asserted to a truer and more excellent kind of liberty, than that which ye value yourselves so much upon by virtue of being Abraham's seed. "Then shall ye be free indeed."

So that our Saviour's meaning is plainly this: that the doctrine of the Christian religion, which the Son of God came to preach to the world, heartily embraced, does assert men to the truest

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and most perfect kind of liberty. I know this is but a metaphor, whereby the benefits and advantages which the doctrine of God our Saviour hath brought to mankind are expressed and set forth to us; but it is a very easy and fit metaphor, and does convey the thing intended very fully to our minds, and hath a great deal of truth and reality under it. And to the end we may understand it the better, I shall do these two things:

First, Observe to you in the general, that the Spirit of God, in the Holy Scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the Christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men.

Secondly, I shall shew particularly in what respects the Son of God by his doctrine makes us free. For when the Son is said to make us free, we are to understand that it is by his doctrine; for that our Saviour had expressly said before, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

First, I shall observe to you in the general, that the Spirit of God, in the Holy Scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the Christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men; more especially by these three—of light, life, and liberty; than which nothing can be named that is more delightful and valuable to men.

By light; of which Solomon says, that "it is sweet, and a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." Hence our Saviour is called "the Sun of righteousness," (Mal. iv. 2.) and "the light of the world." And, (ver. 12. of this chapter) "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not

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walk in darkness." And (chap. i. 9.) he is called "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" or, as the words should rather be translated, "which coming into the world, lighteth every man." He is said "to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." (Luke i. 79.) "To be a light to lighten the nations." (Luke ii. 32.) And the doctrine which he preached is called a light, (John iii. 19.) "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." And (2 Cor. iv. 6.) the gospel is called "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

So likewise by the metaphor of life; which is that which men value above all other things. (John xi. 25.) "I am the resurrection and the life." And, (John xiv. 6.) "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And because bread is the chief support of life, our Saviour is likewise set forth to us under that notion; (John vi. 33.) "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And we are said to "have life through his name," (John xx. 31.) "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." And the doctrine of the gospel is likewise called "the word of life," (Phil. ii. 16.)

And, to come to my present purpose, the benefits and advantages of the gospel are frequently represented to us under the notion of liberty, and redemption from slavery and bondage, which, among men, is valued next to life itself. Hence are those titles given to our Saviour, of a Redeemer, and De-

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liverer; and he is said to have "obtained eternal redemption for us," (Heb. ix. 12.) He is said to have "given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity," (Tit. ii. 14.) And the publishing of the gospel is compared to the proclaiming of the year of jubilee among the Jews, wherein all persons are set at liberty, (Isa. lxi. 1, 2.) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Upon this account likewise is the gospel called by St. James, "the royal law," and "the perfect law of liberty," (James i. 25.)

Thus you see that this is one of the principal metaphors whereby the Scripture sets forth to us the advantages of the Christian doctrine; and that it is not seldom and casually used, but frequently, and upon design, as that which most fitly represents to us the benefits we have by the gospel.

Secondly, I shall now, in the next place, shew more particularly, in what respects the Son of God, by his doctrine, may be said to make us free. And that in these two respects:

I. As it frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice.

II. From the slavery of our lusts and passions.

I. It frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice, which is a more inveterate and obstinate error. And this is a great bondage to the mind of man, to live in ignorance of those things which are useful for us to know, to be mistaken about those matters which are of great moment and

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concernment to us to be rightly informed in: ignorance is the confinement of our understandings, as knowledge, and right apprehensions of things, are a kind of liberty and enlargement to the mind of man. Under this slavery the world groaned, and were "bound in" these "chains of darkness" for many years, till the "light of the glorious gospel" broke in upon the world, and our blessed Saviour, who is truth, came to set us free.

As for the heathen part of the world, the generality of them lived in gross ignorance of God, and pernicious mistakes concerning him. So the apostle tells us, (Rom. i. 21.) that "they were vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." And, (Eph. iv. 17, 18.) that "they walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." They had gross, and unworthy, and false apprehensions concerning the nature of God, by which they were misled into horrible superstitions, and abominable idolatries: and in conformity to the false notions which they had of their deities, and in imitation of their fabulous stories concerning them, they were guilty of all manner of lewdness and vice; so that through their mistakes of God, they were altogether estranged from that virtuous and Divine life, which men ought to lead: and considering what apprehensions they had of God, many of their superstitions and vices were almost unavoidable. And by this advantage of the ignorance that mankind was sunk into, the devil did chiefly maintain and keep up his kingdom; it being next to impossible for men amidst so much darkness to see the right way, and walk in it. It was

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easy for him, when he had thus enslaved their understandings, and blinded their eyes, to "lead them captive at his pleasure."

Yea, the Jews themselves, though they enjoyed many degrees of light beyond the rest of the world, and had the advantage of frequent revelations, yet this was but darkness, in comparison of those clear discoveries which are made to mankind by the gospel; by which many things are revealed to us, which were "hid from ages and generations;" and one of the most important truths, and of the greatest efficacy upon the minds of men, is brought to light, viz. the certainty of a future state and the rewards of it. This the apostle tells us is "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," (2 Tim. i. 10.) Under the dispensation of the law, the Jews had very imperfect notions concerning the Divine nature, and the best and most acceptable way of worshipping God, which they thought to consist in external rites, and carnal observances, in washing of the body, and in sacrifices of lambs, and goats, and other creatures; for which reason the law is frequently represented in the New Testament, as a state of bondage and restraint. It is called "a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear;" a schoolmaster, which kept men under a severe awe and discipline. It is represented as a prison, and a condition of restraint, (Gal. iii. 23.) "Before faith came," that is, before the gospel was revealed, "we were kept under the law, shut up." Upon the same account the temper and disposition of men under that dispensation, is called a spirit of bondage; "ye have not receivedthe spirit of bond-

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age again to fear;" (Rom. vii. 15.) that is, ye are not still under the law. And, on the contrary, the gospel is represented as a state of liberty and adoption, whereby men are freed from the bondage they were in under the law: so that there was great need in reference to the Jews, as well as the heathen world, of a clearer light, and more perfect revelation, to free the minds of men from the servitude of ignorance and error.

And this was a bondage indeed, worse than that of Egypt or Babylon, because they were in love with this slavery, and fond of their fetters; and when "light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light." So that it was one of the hardest things in the world to convince them of their ignorance, and to make them patient of instruction, and willing to be set free from those violent and unreasonable prejudices against our Saviour and his doctrine, which they were possessed withal; insomuch, that the apostles found it an easier work to gain the heathen world, than the Jews. For though the heathens had less knowledge, yet their pride and prejudice were not so great; they were in a thicker darkness than the Jews; but when the light came, they were more willing to entertain it, and did not shut their eyes so wilfully against it; when the prison doors were open, they were glad to come out, and accept of liberty; but the Jews were so obstinately fixed in their prejudice, that they would not let "the truth set them free." When this jubilee, this "acceptable year of the Lord," was proclaimed, they refused the benefit of it; and, like those who were of a servile disposition among them, they were contented to have "their ears bored through," and "to be servants for ever."

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But yet it was a great liberty which the gospel offered to them, had they been sensible of it. For how easy is the mind of man, when it finds itself freed from those errors and prejudices, which it sees others labour under! And how does it rejoice in this liberty! Certainly one of the greatest pleasures of human nature is the discovery of truth, yea even in curious speculations, which are of no great concernment to us. How was Archimedes transported upon a mathematical discovery, so that he thought no sacrifice too great to offer to the gods by way of acknowledgment! but surely the pleasure is justly greater in matters of so great moment and consequence to our happiness! The light of the sun is not more grateful to our outward sense, than the light of truth is to the soul. By ignorance, and error, and prejudice, the mind of man is fettered and entangled, so that it hath not the free use of itself: but when we are rightly informed, especially in those things which are useful and necessary for us to know, we recover our liberty, and feel ourselves enlarged from the restraints we were in before. And this effect the saving truths of the gospel have upon the minds of men, above any discoveries that ever were made to the world. Christianity hath set the world free from those chains of darkness and ignorance it was bound withal, and from the most dangerous and pernicious errors, and that in matters of greatest consequence and importance. This is the first kind of freedom, which we have by the doctrine of the gospel, freedom from the bondage of ignorance, error, and prejudice, in matters of greatest moment and importance to our happiness. And though this liberty be highly to be valued; yet the other, which I am going to speak to, is more considerable, and that is,

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II. Freedom from the slavery of our passions and lusts, from the tyranny of vicious habits and practices. And this, which is the saddest and worst kind of bondage, the doctrine of the gospel is a most proper and powerful means to free us from; and this is that which I suppose is principally intended by our Saviour. For when the Jews told him that they did not stand in need of any liberty, that they were Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any, our Saviour declares what kind of bondage and slavery he meant; "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin." Wickedness and vice are the bondage of the will, which is the proper seat of liberty: and therefore there is no such slave in the world, as a man that is subject to his lusts, that is under the tyranny of strong and unruly passions, of vicious inclinations and habits. This man is a slave to many masters, who are very imperious and exacting; and the more he yieldeth to them, with the greater tyranny and rigour they will use him. One passion hurries a man one way, and another drives him fiercely another; one lust commands him upon such a service, and another calls him off to another work; so that a man under the command and authority of his lusts and passions, is like the centurion's servants, when "they say to him, Come, he must come; and when they say, Go, he must go; when they say, Do this, he must do it; because he is in subjection to them."

How does a man lose the power over himself by any inordinate passions! How do anger and revenge hurry a man into rash and mischievous actions, which he repents of commonly as soon as they are done! How do malice and envy torment the mind, and keep it in continual labour and

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uneasiness! What a slave and drudge is he, who is possessed with an inordinate love for the world, and desire of riches! How does the tyranny of ambition thrust men upon dangers, and torment them with disappointment! What a bondage is it to be under the slavish fear of death! And how does every lust and vicious habit domineer over a man! So that though he desire and many times resolve to do otherwise, yet he is not able to assert his own liberty, and resist the weakest temptations when they come in his way.

And that which makes their condition the worse, is, that every man is wholly at first, and afterwards in some degree, consenting to his own bondage. In other cases most men are made slaves against their wills, by the force and power of others: but the wicked man chooseth this condition, and voluntarily submits himself to it. There are very few to be found in the world, that are so stupid and senseless, so sick of their liberty, and so weary of their happiness, as to put themselves into this condition: but the wicked "sells himself to do wickedly," and parts with that liberty which he may keep; and if he would resolve to do it, and beg God's grace to that purpose, none could take it from him.

And, which is an aggravation of his servile condition, he makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those that were born to be subject to him, his own appetites, and inclinations, and passions. So that this is the worst kind of slavery, so much worse than that of the mines and galleys, as the soul and spirit of a man are more noble and excellent than his body.

Now the doctrine of the gospel is the most proper and effectual means in the world to free us from this servitude; by presenting us with motives and arguments to rescue ourselves from this slavery,

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and conferring upon us strength and assistance to that end. The doctrine of our Saviour represents to us all those considerations which may convince us of the miserable bondage of those who are under the power and dominion of sin, and of the fatal inconvenience of continuing in that state; that "the end of these things" will be death: and to encourage us to vindicate our own liberty, offers us the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to help our weakness, and to strengthen our holy resolutions, and to carry us through those difficulties which of ourselves we are not able to conquer. The Son of God stands by us in this conflict, and "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead" works in us; and if we would make use of this strength which is offered to us, we may "break these bonds in sunder, and cast these cords from us: for greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world:" the Spirit of God is stronger than "that spirit which works in the children of disobedience." So that there is nothing wanting to set us at liberty, but the resolution of our own wills. If we will quit ourselves like men, the power of God and his grace are ready to take our part against all our enemies. "The Son of God was manifest for this end, to take away sin, and to destroy the works of the devil, to redeem us from all iniquity," and "to deliver us from the powers of darkness." And why should we despair of victory and success, when "the Captain of our salvation," who hath "led captivity captive," leads us on, and, as an encouragement to us, shews us his own triumphs and conquests which he hath made over sin and hell? Are we enslaved to the world, and the lusts of it? He hath "overcome the world;" and by faith we may overcome it, that is, by a firm belief and persua-

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sion of those things which he hath revealed to us; "for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Does the fear of sufferings, and persecution, and death, keep us in bondage? The Son of God hath rescued us from this fear, by setting before us the glorious hopes of eternal life. For nothing makes men afraid of death, but the want of assurance of another life, and of the happiness of it: but this our Saviour hath "brought to light by the gospel." By his own death and resurrection he hath given us perfect assurance of life after death, and a blessed immortality. And this, the apostle tells us, was one great reason why the Son of God took our mortal nature upon him, that he might conquer death for us, and free us from the slavish fear of it: (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." The inferences from this discourse shall be these two:

First, To shew us what that liberty is which the Son of God confers upon us. It is not a liberty to sin; for that, our Saviour tells us, is a state of slavery and bondage; "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin." This use indeed some made of the Christian doctrine, to encourage themselves in sin, under the pretence of Christian liberty, and that in the apostles' days. So St. Peter tells us, (2 Pet. ii. 19.) "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption," and in bondage to their lusts. But nothing can be more directly contrary to the great design and intention of the gospel, which indeed promises and declares li-

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berty; but not from the laws of God, and the obligation of their duty, but, as the apostle calls it, from "the law of sin and death." Christian liberty does not consist in being free from our duty, but in doing those things which really tend to our perfection and happiness, in being "free from sin, and becoming the servants of God." This is the proper use and exercise of our liberty, to do what we ought, to live according to reason and the laws of God, which are holy, just, and good. The freedom which the Son of God designed, was our being rescued from the bondage of sin and corruption, of the devil and our own lusts, "that, being delivered from the hands of these enemies, we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives."

Secondly, To persuade us to assert our liberty, "and stand fast in it." The Son of God hath done that which is sufficient on his part to vindicate mankind from the slavery of their lusts and passions: and if we will vigorously set about the work, and put forth our endeavours, we may rescue ourselves from this bondage. And because it must be acknowledged that this is no easy work, therefore, by way of direction and encouragement, I would commend to men these following particulars:

1. To consider seriously the misery and danger of this condition, and the necessity of freeing ourselves from this slavery. I have shewn that it is the worst kind of bondage, and it hath the saddest consequences. Some service, though it be hard and grievous, yet men are content to endure it, because it may prove beneficial to them, and is in order to a greater freedom; but the service of sin is altogether unprofitable. "What fruit had ye then (says the apostle) in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?

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for the end of those things is death.—The wages of sin is death." All the reward that shall be given us for the service, is misery and punishment, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doeth evil." So that it is necessary that we should shake off this yoke, as we desire to escape the chains of darkness, and the unspeakable and insupportable misery of another world. He that now makes us his slaves to do his work, will torment us for the doing of it to all eternity.

2. Seeing this condition is so insupportable, and the consequences of it so dreadful, let us take up a firm and manly resolution to free ourselves from this slavery. It is no easy matter to break off a vicious habit, which we long have been accustomed to; nay, perhaps it is one of the most difficult things that human nature can attempt, and therefore it requires great firmness of mind, and strength of resolution. It is next to the going against nature, and the conquering of that: for custom is a sort of nature, and every habit is a bowing of nature a certain way, and when nature hath once long stood bent one way, it is hard to restore it to its former condition; and nothing but a great resolution, taken up upon a full conviction of the necessity of the thing will carry us through.

3. For the encouragement of this resolution, consider what assistance God hath promised us. Indeed when we consider the difficulty of the thing, and the weakness and unsteadfastness of our own minds, how apt we are to give over when we meet with great opposition and resistance, we might justly be discouraged in our attempts, if we had nothing but our own strength to trust to: but God hath promised to stand by us, and second us in the conflict; and if he be for us, what can stand against

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us! There is nothing too hard for a stout resolution backed by the grace of God.

4. That we may not be discouraged by an apprehension of too much difficulty in the thing, consider that the main difficulty is at first. So soon as we have resolutely begun, the work is half done; if we can but sustain the first brunt, the enemy will give ground apace; every day we shall get more strength, and the habits of sin will be weakened. In all cases there is difficulty in breaking off a habit, and doing contrary to what we have been used and accustomed to do: but after we have practised the contrary awhile, it will every day grow more easy and pleasant; for custom will make any thing so.

5. Consider that the longer we continue in this state, the harder we shall find it to rescue ourselves from it; for sin will every day get more strength, and we shall have less; for vice is so far from being mortified by age, that by every day's continuance in it we increase the power of it: and so much strength as any one adds to his disease he takes from himself. And this is a double weakening of us, when we do not only lose our strength, but the enemy gets it, and will employ it against us. Therefore, let us presently set about this work, "to-day, whilst it is called to-day, lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The longer we continue in sin, the farther God withdraws his grace from us; and not only so, but the devil gets a greater dominion over us, and a firmer possession of us, till by degrees we do insensibly slide into that state, in which, without the miraculous grace of God, we are like for ever to continue. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also be good, that are accustomed to evil." It is next to

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a natural impossibility for a man to rescue himself out of this state.

6. And lastly, Be not discouraged though ye do not meet with that success, at first, which ye expected and hoped for; though after several attempts to recover your liberty, ye be foiled and cast back. It sometimes so happens that some are, by a mighty resolution, and very extraordinary and overpowering degree of God's grace, reclaimed from a wicked life at once: but in the ordinary methods of God's grace, evil habits are mastered and subdued by degrees; and though we be resolved upon a better course, and entered upon it, yet the inclinations to our former course will frequently return upon us, and may sometimes too prevail. And we are not to think this strange: it is nothing but what is natural, and may reasonably be expected. It is no just ground of discouragement to us, if, after we have engaged in a good course, we be sometimes pulled back again, and the habits which we are breaking off from gather strength, and make head again; as an enemy after he is routed, and hath begun to fly, doth frequently rally, and makes as if he would renew the fight again, and may perhaps prevail in a little skirmish: but for all this, we are nevertheless in a fair way to victory, if we will pursue our first advantage, and prosecute it vigorously. Nay, this should be so far from discouraging us, that it should make us resume new courage, that we may not lose what we have got.

I the rather mention this, because many miscarry upon this account, and many good resolutions and attempts to vindicate our liberty from the bondage of corruption, are given over and come to nothing, because men make false accounts of things, and ex-

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pect to conquer and get a complete victory at first: and indeed they are taught by those who are not well skilled in this spiritual warfare, that this work is done in an instant, and the habits of grace and virtue are infused into men at once; and if men give back, all they had done is lost, and that they are in a worse condition, than if they had never begun: whereas usually it is quite otherwise, and the habits of goodness are acquired, as other habits are, by slow degrees at first, and with a great deal of conflict; and it is a good while before a man comes to that confirmed state, that he may be said to have conquered; but if he persists in his resolutions, and when he hath received some foil, take heart again, he is in the way to victory; and though he be not in a perfect state of acceptance with God, yet his endeavours have the acceptance of good beginnings, and he hath no reason to be discouraged at what he had reason to expect when he began this work, if he calculate things aright: and they that tell men otherwise, have taken up false notions in divinity, but do not consult human nature, and the usual progress of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner, and reclaiming him in a wicked course, and have not taken sufficient care to reconcile their notions of divinity, with the nature of things, and the certain and undoubted experience of mankind. Therefore let no man be faint and discouraged upon this account, and think the thing is not to be done, because he doth not meet with perfect success at first; for this seldom happens, and therefore ought not to be expected: but let him still go on and reinforce his resolutions, and the opposition and difficulty will abate, and the work continually grow easier upon his hand, and "the God of peace will at last tread down Satan under his feet."

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SERMON CCXLVII.

[Preached Feb. 15, 1685.]

THE DUTY OF IMPROVING THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY AND ADVANTAGES OF THE GOSPEL

Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.—JOHN xii. 35.

"THEN said Jesus unto them," that is, upon the discourse he had just before had with them, concerning his approaching death, and departure out of this world; at the mention whereof, they were offended and troubled; but instead of that, our Saviour puts them upon that which would be of real use and benefit to them, to improve those advantages and opportunities, which they were like to enjoy but a little while; "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

"Yet a little while is the light with you." This our Saviour speaks of himself, and his personal presence and teaching among them; "Yet a little while is the light with you:" for so he frequently calls himself and his doctrine. (John iii. 19.) "Light is come into the world." (John viii. 12.) "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" that is, such a light as will direct him in the way to

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eternal life; and, (John ix. 5.) "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

"Walk while ye have the light." Light is the opportunity of action, and going about our business, and therefore it is joined with walking and working, as in the text I mentioned before, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness." And (John ix. 4.) where the continuance of this opportunity of light is called the day, and the ceasing or withdrawing of it, the night: "I must work the works of him that sent me, (says our Lord,) while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Therefore we should walk and work while we have the light.

"Lest darkness come upon you." And this will be a dismal and fatal time, when all opportunity of walking and working will be at an end; for when the light hath left us, we shall not be able to see what to do, or whither to go, as our Saviour adds, to enforce his exhortation of making use of the present advantages and opportunities. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth."

All this our Saviour plainly speaks to the Jews, with relation to his own personal presence and preaching among them, which he tells them would shortly cease, and be at an end. In which sense these words do not concern us, but only the Jews at that time, to whom they were spoken; but by an equality of reason, the advice here given by our Saviour, first and immediately to the Jews, may be recommended to us, in the general reason and intention of it; to us, I say, who, though we do not enjoy the light of Christ's personal presence, yet we have the light of his doctrine, and the power and presence

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of his Spirit going along with it, and supplying the absence of his person; so that in effect we have all the advantages and means of salvation, which the Jews had; and we know not how long they may be continued, or how soon they may be taken from us; and therefore the general reason and intendment of this advice concerns us equally with the Jews, and considering the uncertainty of the continuance of the means and opportunities of salvation, either to a particular people or person, we may very well apply these words of our Saviour to ourselves, and as if they had been spoken by him to us as well as to the Jews; "Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

Abstracting then from the particular occasion and meaning of the words, I shall prosecute the general reason and intention of them, as it may be accommodated to us, and that in these following particulars:

First, As we have the like means and opportunities of grace and salvation as the Jews had.

Secondly, In that the season of their continuance is uncertain to us, as well as it was to them; we know not how long they may be continued, nor how soon they may be taken from us.

Thirdly, In that the same duty and obligation lie upon us, of improving the present advantages and opportunities which we enjoy. "Walk while ye have the light."

Fourthly, In that we may justly apprehend the like danger and dismal consequence of being deprived of these happy opportunities and advantages. "Lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

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Fifthly, I shall consider by what things God is more especially provoked, to deprive a people of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation.

And then, lastly, What is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and procure, if it may be, "a lengthening of our tranquillity." I shall go over these particulars as briefly as I can.

First, That we have the like means and opportunities of grace and salvation as the Jews had; not the very same in kind, and all the circumstances of them, as I noted before, but the same equivalently, and in substance, and to all the other purposes of our eternal salvation and happiness, if we make a right use of them. The Jews had the personal presence and preaching of Christ among them; they did converse familiarly with him, "did eat and drink in his presence," and heard him "teach in their streets;" which was a very valuable and signal privilege, vouchsafed only to that people, and only in that age. For as to his personal presence and conversation, "he was not sent, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But we have still the same means and advantages in substance, which they had; "the gospel is preached to us, as well as to them;" we have all the light and direction concerning our duty, and all the encouragement to holiness and obedience, which they had; and there is still the same inward operation and concurrence of God's Holy Spirit, accompanying his word, and making way for the entertainment of it; if there be but the same "obsequiousness of faith" in us, and readiness to "receive the truth in the love of it, that we may be saved."

Nay, we have several advantages above them; that the Christian religion does not lie under those pre-

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judices in respect of us, which it did with them; it hath been now for many ages received and established among us, and the prejudice of education is on its side; and it hath had great and manifold confirmation given to it, since our Saviour's time, by the wonderful success and prevalency of it in the world, notwithstanding all the disadvantages it lay under, and the mighty opposition that was raised against it, by the remarkable fulfilling of many of our Saviour's predictions concerning the final destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the desolation of that city, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation over the world, and their being hated of all nations, which hath now continued for above sixteen hundred years, and we see it at this day, as if the providence of God had ordered it on purpose, for a standing monument and testimony in all ages, of the truth of the Christian religion.

So that, blessed be God! there is no want of means "to bring us to the knowledge of the truth, that we may be saved;" no want of evidence to confirm to us the truth of this religion: there is nothing wanting on God's part; if there be any failure and defect, it is ours, who will not walk in the light, while we have it; nor "know in this our day the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes."

Secondly, The season of the continuance of these means of grace and salvation, which are afforded to us, is uncertain to us, as well as it was to them. We know not how long they may be vouchsafed to us, nor how soon they may be taken away from us: "Yet a little while the light is with you," saith our Saviour to the Jews; meaning, that he himself should shortly be put to death, and removed from

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them. This is not just our case: but thus far it agrees, that the light of the gospel, and the blessed opportunities which thereby we enjoy, are of an uncertain continuance, and may be of a lesser or longer duration, as God pleaseth, and according as we make use of them, and demean ourselves under them. I remember there is a very odd passage in Mr. Herbert's poems, which whether it be only the prudent conjecture and foresight of a wise man, or there be something more prophetical in it, I cannot tell; it is this:

> "Religion stands on tiptoes in our land,
> Ready to pass to the American strand.
> When Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames,
> By letting in them both, pollute her streams,
> Then shall religion to America flee:
> They have their times of gospel, even as we."

The meaning of it is this: that when the vices of Italy shall pass into France, and the vices of both shall overspread England, then the gospel will leave these parts of the world, and pass into America, to visit those dark regions, which have so long "sat in darkness and the shadow of death." And this is not so improbable, if we consider, what vast colonies in this last age have been transplanted out of Europe into those parts, as it were on purpose to prepare and make way for such a change. But, however that be, considering how impiety and all manner of wickedness do reign among us, we have too much cause to apprehend, that if we do not reform and grow better, the providence of God will find some way or other to deprive us of that light, which is so abused and affronted by our wicked and lewd lives; and God seems now to say to us,

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as our Lord did to the Jews, "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." I proceed to the

Third particular, That there is the same duty and obligation upon us, that was upon the Jews, of improving the present advantages and opportunities of salvation which we enjoy; and our Lord says to us, as well as to them, "Walk while ye have the light." He expects from us, that we should make use of those blessed opportunities, and answer those manifold advantages, which are afforded to us, above most nations of the world; that we should improve our knowledge in religion, and advance daily in the practice of it; that we should work while it is day, and that the more light we have, the better our lives should be. For this is to walk in the light; to make use of the present advantages and opportunities, and to be active and industrious "to work out our own salvation; to be fruitful in every good word and work, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." The apostle St. Peter tells us at large, what obligation the knowledge of the gospel lays upon all Christians, to make answerable improvement in all goodness and virtue: (2 Pet. i. 3—9.) "According as his Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to know-

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ledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." If the gospel have not this effect upon us, if we make no use of the light of it, we do not consider that the proper effect of the Christian religion, is to purge men from those sins and vices which reigned in them before; and if it have not this effect upon us, it had been better for us to have been without this light and knowledge. So the same apostle declares: (chap. ii. 21.) "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." I proceed to the

Fourth particular, That if we make no improvement of these happy advantages and opportunities, we may justly apprehend the like danger, and dismal consequences of being deprived of them. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth." God's dealing with the Jews upon this provocation was very terrible; and, as the apostle saith upon another occasion, "it serves for an example and admonition to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come." They who not only opposed and rejected that light which God sent among them, but did what in them lay to extinguish and put it out, by putting to death the Son of God, deserved to have been immediately

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deprived of that light, and to have been left in utter darkness: but God was pleased in his great mercy to grant a reprieve to them, and to continue the great blessing of the gospel to them for forty years longer: but when, notwithstanding this, they still continued impenitent, God at last withdrew this light, and by a particular providence gave warning to the Christians to flee from Jerusalem, just before the siege was laid to it; and then darkness came upon them indeed, and they knew not whither they went, nor what they did; the things of their peace were then hid from their eyes, because they would not know the time of their visitation. They fell into the greatest disorders and confusions, and, by the just judgment of God, were strangely blinded and hardened to their own ruin; and being forsaken of God, and of his glorious gospel, which they had rejected, they exercised all sorts of violence and cruelty upon one another, and were abandoned to all manner of wickedness and folly; not only offending against their own law, for which they pretended so great a veneration, but committing things contrary to all laws of nature and humanity; as may be seen at large in the history of the siege of Jerusalem, written by Josephus, who lived in that time.

And there is the like danger, I do not say of the very same judgments, (for there was something peculiar in their case, they not only rejecting and abusing the gospel, but killing and crucifying the Son of God, who brought those glad tidings to them;) but of very great and dismal calamities, if ever we provoke God by our abuse of the gospel, and great unfruitfulness under it, to deprive us of so invaluable a blessing. Whenever that leaves us,

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we may expect the most dismal judgments and calamities to break in upon us.

For that parable concerning the husbandmen, who, instead of rendering to their lord the fruits of his vineyard in due season, evilly entreated, and killed those whom he sent to them; I say, this parable, though it immediately respected the Jews, yet it does in proportion concern all that live unfruitfully under the gospel: (Matt. xxi. 40, 41.) "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." And, (ver. 43, 44.) "Therefore I say unto you, (says our Lord,) The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

The removal of the gospel from any people, as it is the greatest judgment in itself, so it is likely to be accompanied with the greatest temporal miseries and calamities; and so in fact it hath happened not only to the Jews, whose case, as I said before, hath something in it peculiar, but to other churches and nations: to the seven famous churches of Asia, the cities of them being demolished and laid waste, and the very place of several of them hardly known at this day. And so likewise it hath happened to the flourishing churches of Africa, where Christianity is extinguished, and the place of them now the great seat of barbarism and slavery.

And God seems to set these examples before us, as a dreadful warning and admonition to us, and

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to say to us as he did to the people of Jerusalem, (Jer. vii. 12—15.) "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you, and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren." I proceed to the

Fifth particular I mentioned, which is to consider, By what means God is more especially provoked to deprive a people of the light of the gospel, and the means of salvation. By these two more especially—by a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under them; and by a general impiety and wickedness.

1. By a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means and opportunities of salvation plentifully afforded to us. This our Saviour represents to us in the parable of the husbandmen, which I mentioned before, who rendered no fruit of the vineyard let out to them, for which they are threatened to have the vineyard taken from them, and let out to other husbandmen, who will render the fruits of it in their seasons. And in the same chapter (Matt. xxi. 19.) we find our Saviour cursing the fig-tree, which he saw in the way, because he found nothing thereon but leaves only. Leaves are the outward show and profession of religion; but if there be no fruit, we may justly fear a curse: for

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our Saviour did not curse the fig-tree for its own sake, but for our example. *Sterilitas nostra in ficu vapulat;* "Our barrenness is corrected and chastised in the curse which he pronounced upon the fig-tree." To the same purpose there is a remarkable parable of a barren fig-tree, and of the husbandman's patient expectation of fruit from it, (Luke xiii. 7—9.) after three years' waiting. "Then said he unto the dresser of this vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." It is literally true, that fruit may be expected from a fig-tree at farthest the third year; and if in that time it doth not bear, it is almost in vain to expect it: but our Saviour intended by this parable to reprove the Jews, among whom he had taken so much pains for three years, and was now upon his fourth, resolving with the utmost patience to expect the fruit of repentance, and obedience to his doctrine, and then to leave them, and withdraw that light from them which they made no use of: and yet after this, he continued his apostles among them, who preached the doctrine of life and salvation to them for many years, before he punished their barrenness under all those means, by taking away his gospel from them, and giving them up to utter ruin and destruction.

2. Another and higher provocation of Almighty God to take away his gospel from a nation, is great and general impiety and wickedness, an universal corruption and depravation of manners. When the

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vineyard which God hath planted with so much care, doth not only not bring forth good grapes, but bring forth wild grapes, as it is in the parable of the prophet Isaiah, concerning the house of Israel; then God will break down the hedge of it, and lay it waste; and will also "command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it." When no means will prevail upon a people to bring them to goodness, God will then give over all care of them, and deprive them of the means whereby they should be made better. When they do not only frustrate his expectation, but do quite contrary to what he looked for, he will be no farther concerned for them. So we find in the application of that parable; (Isa. v. 7.) "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." And this we find under the gospel, (Heb. vi. 7, 8.) "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Briars and thorns are not mere unfruitfulness under the gospel, but contempt of it, and affronting it by our wicked lives. When infidelity and contempt of religion appear openly in a nation, and impiety and vice grow impudent and universal, even when the gospel shineth in its clearest and strongest light, and the wrath of God, not only in his word, but by his providence, and "by terrible things in righteousness," is so plainly "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of

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men;" when people are taught their duty, and the true knowledge of God, but will receive no instruction, but persist in their lewd and vicious courses, and "commit iniquity with greediness;" this, if any thing, is a just provocation of Almighty God to remove his candlestick from such a nation as this, and to leave them in darkness; since light hath no other effect upon them, but to make them more wild and extravagant. There remains only the

Sixth and last particular, which I mentioned, to be spoken to; namely, What is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and to procure, if it may be, "a lengthening of our tranquillity," and a longer enjoyment of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation. And our best direction in this case, will be to follow the counsel which the Spirit gives to the seven churches of Asia, to prevent the removing of their candlestick out of its place; that is, their being deprived of the light of the gospel, which shone so clearly among them: "He then that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." To the church of Ephesus, (Rev. ii. 5.) "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." To the church of Smyrna, (ver. 10.) "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." To the church of Pergamos, (ver. 16.) "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly." To the church of Sardis, (chap. iii.

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ver. 2, 3.) " Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." To the church of Laodicea, (ver. 19.) " Be zealous therefore, and repent."

You see what are the means prescribed by the Spirit of God, to prevent the removing of our candlestick out of its place; to be sensible of our great degeneracy from our primitive piety, and the strict practice of religion; and to exercise a deep repentance for it, and effectually to reform, and do our first works. " Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works." And then great vigilancy and watchfulness, that we be not surprised before we are aware: " Be watchful; for if thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Now watchfulness implies great sobriety and temperance, and is usually joined with fervent and earnest prayer: " Watch ye therefore, and pray always." Next, to hold fast the doctrine which we have received and heard, the faith which was once delivered to the saints, (as St. Jude calls it:) " Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast." And lastly, zeal for God's glory, and an undaunted resolution to adhere to it, notwithstanding all dangers and sufferings. " Be zealous, fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, but be thou faithful unto the death."

If we follow this counsel, we may hope, nay, we may be assured, that God will still continue to us

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the blessed means and opportunities of grace and salvation: that our pastors shall "not be removed into corners, but that our eyes shall still see our teachers;" that God will not let "darkness come upon us:" or if the light of the gospel should be obscured and eclipsed, that it will be but for a little while, and will soon pass over. But if we will not hearken and obey, if we will not repent and do our first works, we have reason to apprehend, that "God will come against us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place," and take away that light which we have abused, and carry it into some other quarter of the world; and, as our Saviour threatens the Jews, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from us, and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

I shall only add that counsel given by the prophet Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar, and which is very proper for a people and nation, and likewise for particular persons, for the prevention of spiritual as well as temporal judgments, (Dan. iv. 27.) "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thy iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Nothing so likely, not only to reconcile God to us, but to turn away his judgments from us, as repentance and reformation of our wicked lives, and the practice of alms and charity. "Alms shall deliver from death," saith the wise man, speaking of the benefit that redounds to particular persons: and by parity of reason, the charity and alms of a great number may save a nation, both from temporal and spiritual judgments: charity and alms to the poor, especially those that are poor and destitute by "forsaking all for God and his truth." And nothing gives greater hopes of

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God's mercy to us, than that general charitable disposition which appears among us.

What I have said needs no long application; I shall therefore do it in very few words. This calls upon the whole nation, and every one of us, "to remember from whence we are fallen, and to repent and do our first works;" to endeavour to recover that ancient piety and virtue which flourished in the days of our forefathers, and was so great an ornament to our holy religion. Blessed be God! that, by his goodness, and the protection of a gracious prince, we still enjoy the blessed means and opportunities of grace and salvation: but if we be still unfruitful under them, and will not "walk in the light," the just providence of God may have a thousand ways to deprive us of it, and "to bring darkness upon us."

And what I have said in general to the whole nation, and what our Saviour here says to the Jews, we may accommodate every one to ourselves. "Yet a little while the light is with us, let us walk in the light, while we have it, lest darkness come upon us." We know not how long the opportunity of life, as well as of grace, may be continued to us; they may be taken from us, or we may be cut off from them.

The season of our solemn repentance is now approaching; let us improve it, as if it were to be our last opportunity of making our peace with God: and let us lose no time, lest we die in our delay, and in our security we be destroyed.

I will conclude with the earnest exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah: (chap. xiii. ver. 16.) "Give glory to the Lord your God, (that is, repent,) before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble

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upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." To which I will only add the advice of our blessed Saviour: (Luke xxi. 36.) "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

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SERMON CCXLVIII.

THE FOLLY OF HAZARDING ETERNAL LIFE FOR TEMPORAL ENJOYMENTS.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—MATT. xvi. 26.

THE great question that a wise man puts to himself in any design or undertaking, is this—What shall I be the better for it, if I obtain what I seek for? If all things succeed according to my desire, what benefit and advantage will it be to me? Or, if I gain in one respect, shall I not be as great or a greater loser in another? When all things are calculated and cast up, what will be the foot of the account? Upon the whole matter, and in the final issue and result of things, what will be the gain or loss? For though the advantage appear never so great in one respect, yet if this be overbalanced by a greater hazard and loss in another kind, far more considerable; it is upon the whole matter a foolish bargain, and a wise man will not meddle with it. And this is the question which our Saviour here puts, "What is a man profited?" &c.

For the understanding of which words, we must look back to the verses immediately before, wherein our Saviour tells his followers upon what terms they may be his disciples, and list themselves in his service: (ver. 24, 25.) "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,

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and follow me. Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it;" that is, Whosoever, by declining the profession of the gospel for fear of persecution, shall hope to save this temporal life, shall lose that which is infinitely more considerable, eternal life: and whoever for my sake and the gospel's shall expose himself to persecution, and the loss of this temporal life, shall find a better life in lieu of it, shall at last be made partaker of eternal life. And this certainly is wisdom, not to lose that which is more valuable, for the purchasing of that which is less considerable; "For what is a man profited," &c.

"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Here our translators have unnecessarily changed the signification of the same word that was used before: for the word here translated *soul*, is the very same which is used for *life*, in the verse before; and there is no reason to alter the rendering of it; for the sense is very current thus: "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

This was a proverbial speech used among the Jews, to signify that men value life above any thing in this world, and it seems to allude to that expression in Job, "Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life;" that is, men will part with any thing in this world to save their lives.

Now this proverbial sentence, which the Jews used concerning this temporal life, our Saviour does very fitly apply to the purpose he was speaking of, and argues *a fortiori* from this temporal life to eternal

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life. For if we think all that we have well bestowed to ransom our lives, then much more should we be willing to part with this mortal life, and all the enjoyments of it, to purchase eternal life, which doth in true value more exceed this life, than this life does any thing else in this world.

And that our Saviour doth apply this proverb of the Jews to a higher purpose, namely, to eternal life, is plain, from what he adds in the verse after the text, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works;" that is, there is another life after this, wherein men shall be happy or miserable, according as they have behaved themselves in this world, and then it will appear who have made the best bargain, and who at last will prove the greatest gainers, they who by following me have hazarded this temporal life, and receive in lieu of it life eternal; or they who by denying me, have secured their temporal lives, but forfeited the eternal life and happiness of the next world.

So that the meaning and force of our Saviour's argument is plainly this: What advantage would it be to any man, if he could gain the whole world, and should be ruined for ever? or what would a man that had brought himself into this miserable condition, give to redeem and rescue himself out of it?

And that this is plainly our Saviour's meaning, will appear, if we consider how St. Luke expresseth the same thing: (Luke ix. 25.) "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, and be cast away?" So that the emphasis and force of our Saviour's argument, is not to be laid

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upon the word soul, as our translators seem to have laid it; for St. Luke hath omitted this word: but it lies in the application of this proverbial speech, which the Jews used concerning this temporal life, to life eternal.

Having thus cleared the true meaning and intention of these words, I shall consider in them, what may be most useful for us to fix our thoughts and meditations upon.

In these words we have two cases supposed, and a question put upon each of them.

First, Suppose a man should gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what would be the advantage of it? "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?"

Secondly, Suppose a man had made such a bargain, and undone himself for ever to gain the world; when he comes to be sensible of his folly, what would he not give to undo this bargain? "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" that is, to redeem and recover what he hath lost.

And indeed these questions carry their own answer and resolution in them. Suppose a man should gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what advantage would it be to him? would it be any? No, certainly, very far from it; for the words are a μείωσις, and signify more than they seem to express; "What is a man profited?" that is, he would be so far from being a gainer, that he would be a vast loser by it.

And suppose a man had made such a bargain, had thus undone himself to gain the world, would he not reflect severely upon his own folly afterward? Yes, certainly, he would give the whole world, if he had it, to undo it again.

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So that the sense of these words may be resolved into these two propositions:

First, That it is a foolish bargain for a man "to lose his soul," and forfeit his eternal happiness, upon any terms, though it were "to gain the whole world."

Secondly, That whoever makes this bargain, will one time or other sadly rue it, and be sensible of the monstrous folly of it. "What would a man give in exchange for his soul?" that is, What would he not give to be put in his former condition, and be left to make a new choice?

First, That it would be a most foolish bargain, for a man to purchase the whole world with the loss of his soul, and his eternal happiness.

The folly of this one would think sufficiently evident at first sight; yet we see men every day guilty of it, so that either they do not discern it, or they do not consider it; therefore, to make men sensible of their monstrous folly herein, we will consider these two things:

I. How inconsiderable the purchase is. And,

II. How great a price is paid for it. For that is a foolish bargain, when we pay a great deal too much for a thing, a mighty price for that which is little worth.

I. The purchase is inconsiderable. Our Saviour here puts the case to the greatest advantage on the purchaser's side, and makes the very best of it; he supposeth the gain much greater than any man ever made, he puts a case next to an impossibility, that "a man shall gain the whole world," which no man ever did, or was in any probability of doing. Alexander bid fairest for it, and because he overrun a few great countries, is called a conqueror of the world: but let a man survey the globe, and he

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will soon see how small a part of the world he had mastered; it was but inconsiderable in comparison of the rest of the then known world; and much less if we take in those vast and spacious regions, which have since been discovered: so that if he had understood either the world or himself better, he might have spared his crying for want of more to subdue. But suppose a man could gain all the world, and command all the conveniences and pleasures of it, yet all this, if it be duly weighed, will be found to be no great purchase, especially if we consider these three things:

1. If we had it all, yet the great uncertainty of holding it, or any part of it.

2. The impossibility of using and enjoying it all.

3. If we had it, and could use it all, the improbability of being contented with it. If a man had the whole world, it is uncertain whether he could hold it, or any part of it, for any time; if he should hold it, it is impossible he should use and enjoy it all; if he could use it, it is probable he would not be contented with it: and what a goodly purchase is this when it is all of it uncertain; and the greatest part of it useless to us; and when we have it, we are as far from satisfaction, as if we were without it! All these considerations must needs mightily sink the value of this purchase, and take us off from our fondness of a small part, when the whole is so inconsiderable.

1. If we had it all, the uncertainty of holding it, or any part of it. The very supposition of gaining the world doth imply, that it is lost from those that had it before; which shews the possession of these things to be uncertain, and that they are not sure to continue in the same hand. When Alexander con-

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quered Darius, and took his kingdoms, just so much as Alexander got, Darius lost; so that if a man could gain the whole world from those who are now the lords and possessors of it, the very gaining it from others, must needs be a demonstration to him of the fickleness and uncertainty of these things.

No man is sure of any thing in this world for his life, or for any considerable part of it: and if he were, yet no man is sure of his life for one moment. How many ways hath the providence of God to change the greatest prosperity of this world into the greatest misery and sorrow, and in an instant to overturn the greatest fortune, to throw down the proudest aspirer, to impoverish the wealthiest prince, and to make extremely miserable the most happy man that ever was in this world! This change of fortune may be made by the rapine of our enemies, or the treachery of our friends; by a storm at sea, or a fire at land; by our own folly, or by the malice of others, or by the immediate hand of God.

Nay, all the outward circumstances of happiness may continue firm and unshaken, and yet a man may be extremely miserable by the inward vexation and discontent of his own mind; and if riches, and greatness, and prosperity, would stick by us, we ourselves are fickle and uncertain. "Our life is a vapour" easily blown away, and though it be the foundation of all other enjoyments in this world, yet it is as frail and inconstant as any of them; so that if a man could gain the whole world, yet this great purchase would be clogged with a double uncertainty, either of losing it, or leaving it; either of having these taken from us, or ourselves snatched from them.

2. Suppose a man had gained the whole world, and were sure to keep it for a considerable time, yet

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it is impossible he should enjoy it all. Though no man yet ever had, yet it is possible he may have a title to the whole world, and a great deal of care and trouble to secure that against the violence and ambition of others: but a title to a thing is one thing, and the real use of it another. There are a great many things in the world, of which no man ever yet understood the true nature and proper use; to these a man may have a title, and be actually possessed of them, yet no man can be said to enjoy any thing farther than he understands the nature and use of it. But suppose this great man had a mind and understanding vast and boundless as his dominions and possessions are, yet he could enjoy but a very small part of what he possesseth: there are millions in the world, that in despite of him would share these pleasures equally with him; equally, I say, to all the purposes of human life, and of a temporal felicity, and enjoy as much as he.

It may, perhaps, give a man some imaginary pleasure, to survey in his thoughts how much he hath the command of; but when he hath done, he cannot tell what to do with the hundred thousandth part of what he possesseth, he cannot so much as have the slight and transitory pleasure of beholding it with his eyes, any otherwise than in a chart or map, which every man else may do as well as he; but as to all real benefits and advantages, he can enjoy but a very small part of the world, according to the necessity and the capacity of a man.

He hath, indeed, wherewithal to make himself more soft and delicate, wherewith to surfeit sooner and to be sick oftener than other men; but whatever can minister to true pleasure and delight, and serve any real occasions of nature, there are thousands in

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the world will enjoy as well as he. He may have the opportunity of cloying himself with the sight of more dishes, and of being almost every day stifled in the crowd of a numerous train, and of doing every thing with a thousand eyes upon him; but he must of necessity want both the real pleasure and enjoyment of a great many things, which even a poorer man may have; he can neither eat with that appetite, nor sleep with that pleasure, that a labouring man does. The constant fulness, both of his stomach and table, makes him incapable of ever having a feast; and the height and prosperity of his fortune, keep him from having any friends; or, which comes all to one, from knowing that he hath any; for that no man can know, till the change of his condition give him the opportunity to discern between his friends and his flatterers.

So that if a man could "gain the whole world," it would be no such mighty purchase; and the very first thing such a man would do, if he were wise enough to contrive his own happiness, would be to take so much to himself as would serve all the real uses and conveniences of human life, and to rid his hands of the rest, as fast as he could. And who can think it reasonable, eagerly to desire and seek after that which a wise man would think it reasonable to part with if he had it?

3. If it were possible that one man could gain, and really use all the world, it is a thousand to one this man would find no great happiness and contentment in it; because we see in daily experience, that it is not the increase of riches, or the accessions of honours, that give a man happiness and satisfaction; because this does not spring from external enjoyments, but from the inward frame and

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disposition of a man's mind: and that man who can govern his passions and stint his desires, will as soon find contentment in a moderate fortune, as in the revenues of a kingdom; and he that cannot do this, is not to be satisfied with abundance; he hath an unnatural thirst, like that of a dropsy, which is sooner quenched by abstinence, than by drinking; the more he pours in, the more he is inflamed.

He that considers the world, may easily observe, that poverty and contentment do much oftener meet together, than a great fortune and a satisfied mind. All fulness is naturally uneasy, and men are many times in greater pain after a full meal, than when they sat down. The greatest enjoyments of this world, as they are vanity, so they are usually attended with "vexation of spirit."

God hath so contrived things, that, ordinarily, the pleasures of human life do consist more in hope than enjoyment; so that if a man had gained all the world, one of the chief pleasures of life would be gone, because there would be nothing more left for him to hope for in this world. For whatever happiness men may fancy to themselves in things at a distance, there is not a more melancholy condition than to be at the top of greatness, and to have nothing more left to aspire after; and he is a miserable man whose desires are not satisfied, and yet his hopes are at an end; so that if a man could do what Alexander thought he had done, conquer the whole world, when that work was over, he would in all probability do just as he did, sit down and weep that there was nothing more left for him to do. You see, then, what the purchase amounts to; suppose a man could "gain the whole world," he would be as far from contentment, as he

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that possesseth the least share and portion of it. Let us now consider, in the

II. Second place, the price that is here supposed to be paid for it; the man "gains the whole world, but he loseth his own soul;" that is, he ruins himself for ever; he deprives himself of a happiness infinitely greater than this world can afford, and that not for a little while, but for ever; and he exposeth himself to a misery so great, as no man that considers it would endure for one hour, for all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

And now the purchase may be allowed to be very considerable, when so intolerable a price is paid for it; when for the present enjoyment of so short and imperfect a felicity as this world can afford, a man hath quitted his interest in a blessed immortality, and chose to "dwell with everlasting burnings." I am really afraid to tell you how much misery is involved in these few words, of "losing a man's soul;" the consideration is so full of horror, that I am loath to enter into it.

The loss is great and irreparable; great beyond all imagination, for he that loseth his soul, loseth himself; not his being, that would be a happy loss indeed, but that still remains to be a foundation of misery, and a scene of perpetual woe and discontent. The loss of the soul implies the loss of God, and of happiness, and all that is desirable and delightful to a reasonable creature; nay, it does not only signify the privation of happiness, but the infliction of the greatest misery and torment. Could I represent to you those dismal prisons, into which wicked and impure souls are thrust, and the miseries they there endure, without the least spark of comfort, or glimmering of hope; how they are en-

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compassed about with woe, and lie wallowing in the flames; how they sigh and groan under the intolerable wrath of God, the insolent scorn and cruelty of devils, the severe lashes, and raging anguish, and fearful despair of their own minds, without intermission, without pity, without hope; could I represent these things to you, you were not able to hear the least part of what these miserable wretches are condemned for ever to endure.

And the loss is not only vast, but irreparable; the soul once lost, is lost for ever. We may part with our souls to gain the world; but if we would give a thousand worlds, we cannot regain our souls. "The redemption of a soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever." The loss of it is so great, that nothing can recompense it; and so fatal, that it is never to be repaired. The happiness that the man parts withal, who makes this mad bargain, is so vast, both in respect of the degree and duration of it, that nothing can make amends for so great a loss; and the sufferings which the man exposeth himself to are so dreadful, that "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," can be no temptation to any man, to run the hazard of enduring them. Epicurus, who very well understood the rates of pain and pleasure, is peremptory in this assertion, that it is great folly for any man to purchase pleasure with equal pain, because there is nothing got by it, they balance one another: it must, surely, then, be a strange madness in any man, for the transitory delights of this world, to forfeit the eternal pleasures of God's presence, and for the joys of a moment to live in pain for ever.

And is it not then a prodigious folly that possesseth sinners, who can be contented to venture

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their souls and their happiness, their immortal souls and their everlasting happiness, upon such cheap and easy terms? The folly is great, if we only consider what an unequal price they pay for so small a purchase: but it is much greater, if we regard the foolish order of their choice; first, to please themselves with a shadow and appearance of happiness, and then to be really miserable afterward. If the happiness were true and real, it were an imprudent method. As if a man should choose to enjoy a great estate for a few days, and to be extremely poor the remaining part of his life. If there were any necessity of making so unequal a bargain, surely a man would reserve the best condition to the last; for precedent sufferings and trouble do mightily recommend the pleasures that are to ensue, and render them more tasteful than they would otherwise have been; whereas the greatest heightening of misery, the saddest aggravation of an unhappy condition, is to fall into it from the height of a prosperous fortune. It is comfortable for a man to come out of the cold to a warm fire; but if a man in a great heat shall leap into the cold water, it will strike him to the heart. Such is the fond choice of every sinner, to pass immediately out of a state of the greatest sensual pleasure, into the most quick and sensible torments. This our Saviour fully represents to us in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man; (Luke xvi. 25.) where Abraham is brought in upbraiding the rich man for his foolish and preposterous choice; "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." This made a vast difference; the rich man received his good things first, and then

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was tormented: Lazarus first received his evil things, and then was comforted; and how comfortable was Abraham's bosom to him, after he had lain in so much misery and want at the rich man's gate! and, on the other hand, how grievous must pain and torment be to that man, who never was acquainted with any thing but ease and pleasure!

But it may be all this is but a supposition; and there is no man so forsaken of his reason, and of common prudence, as to make such a bargain. Surely no man that is reasonable, no man that considers the difference between time and eternity, between a few years and everlasting ages, can be persuaded to forego the happiness of heaven, and "to fall into the hands of the living God," no, not if the whole world were offered to him for consideration. Indeed, these large terms of "gaining the whole world," are but a supposition, which our Saviour makes to shew the unreasonableness of most men's choice; but in truth, and in effect, the case of sinners is much worse. Among all these numerous troops of sinners that go to hell in such throngs, there is not one of them that ever made himself so wise a bargain; and though the whole world be but a pitiful price to be paid for a man's soul, yet so stupid are the greatest part of those creatures, whom we call reasonable, as to strike up a bargain for little scraps and portions of this world. There are but a few who stand upon such terms as this world thinks considerable. They are a sort of more generous sinners, that damn themselves for a crown and a kingdom, that will not do an act of injustice upon lower terms than a manor or a lordship. Alas! most men barter away their souls for a trifle; and set their eternal happiness to sale for a

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thing of nought. How many are there, who, to gratify their covetousness, or lust, or revenge, or any other inordinate passion, are content to hazard the loss of their souls! who will go to hell rather than be out of the fashion! and damn themselves out of mere compliment to the company, and cannot be persuaded to leave off that foolish custom of swearing, which hath neither pleasure nor profit in it, no, not to save their souls!

Thus it is in truth, and the supposition which our Saviour here makes of "gaining the whole world," is but a feigned case, the market was never yet so high, no sinner had ever yet so great a value for his immortal soul, as to stand upon such terms; alas! infinitely less than the whole world, a little sordid gain, the gratifying of a vile lust, or an unmanly passion, the smile or the frown of a great man, the fear of singularity, and of displeasing the company; these, and such-like mean and pitiful considerations, tempt thousands every day to make away with themselves, and to be undone for ever.

I have done with the first thing, the folly of this adventure; "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" I proceed to the

Second, The severe reflection men will make upon themselves for this their folly. What would they not give to undo this foolish bargain? "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" to redeem and recover so great a loss? And sooner or later every man will be sensible of this folly; probably in this world, but most certainly in the other; and then, "What would a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Whenever the sinner comes to reflect upon him-

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self, and to consider seriously what he hath done, with what indignation will he look upon himself, and censure his own folly! Like a man who, in a drunken fit, hath passed away his estate for a trifling consideration; the next morning, when he is sober and come to himself, and finds himself a beggar, how does he rate himself for being such a beast and a fool, as to do that in a blind and rash heat, which he will have cause to repent as long as he hath a day to live!

Or, if the sinner be able to keep off these thoughts, while he is well in health, yet, when he is seized upon by sickness, and comes to lie upon a death-bed, he will then, in all probability, be sadly sensible what a fool he hath been. When he shall stand upon the confines of eternity, and look back upon this world; which, how considerable soever it once appeared to him, can signify nothing now that he is to leave it; when he considers how much he hath parted with, and is now like to lose for ever, for the false and treacherous advantages of a vain world, he will then need nobody to convince him of his error, to aggravate his folly to him; he now repents heartily that he was not wiser, and wisheth for nothing so much, as that God would grant him time to revoke and undo this foolish bargain; and how glad would he be to give the world back again to secure his soul, and to throw up all his unjust gain, and the advantages he hath indirectly made by fraud, or violence! This, I doubt not, is the sense of most men, when they come to leave the world: and if it is true then, it is so now. Let us, then, while the opportunities of life are before us, suffer these considerations to take place and prevail, which otherwise would wound us to the heart, and

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fill our souls with anguish and despair in a dying hour.

O the folly and stupidity of men! to be so transported with present and sensible things, as to have no consideration of our future state, no pity for our souls, no sense of our everlasting abode in another world! to be so blinded by sense, so bribed by "the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment," as to forfeit the happiness of all eternity! when the pleasure is past and gone, and the dear price comes to be paid down, and our souls are leaving this world, and going to take possession of that everlasting inheritance of shame and sorrow, of tribulation and anguish, which we have purchased to ourselves by our own folly, how shall we then repent ourselves of that bargain which we have so rashly made, but can never be released from!

It is our lot, who have the souls of men committed to our charge, to see many of these sad sights. O my God! what confusion have I sometimes seen in the face of a dying man! what terrors on every side! what restless working, and violent throes of a guilty conscience! and how are we tempted (who commonly are sent for too late to minister comfort to such persons), I say, how are we tempted to sow pillows under their uneasy heads, and, out of very pity and compassion, are afraid to say the worst, and are grieved at our very hearts to speak those sad truths, which yet are fit for them to hear! It is very grievous to see a man in the paroxysms of a fever, or in the extreme torment of the stone, or in the very agony of death: but the saddest sight in the world is the anguish of a dying sinner: nothing looks so ghastly, as the final despair of a wicked man, when God is taking away his soul!

But whatever sense men have of these things,

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when they come to lie upon a sick bed; every sinner will most certainly be convinced, when he comes into another world. We shall then have nothing to divert us from these thoughts; we shall feel that which will be a sensible demonstration to us of our own folly. Then men will curse those false and flattering pleasures which have cheated them into so much misery; but their own folly most of all, for being so easily abused. Then would they give ten thousand worlds, if they had them, to recover the opportunity of a new choice; but it cannot be: they parted with their souls once at a cheap rate; but no price will then be accepted for the redemption of them.

O that men would consider these things in time! for they are plain and evident to those that will consider them. Our Saviour tells us, we have so much evidence, that he that will not be convinced by it, would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead to testify unto him. We have Moses and the prophets; nay, we have the Son of God himself, who hath revealed these things to us; and if we would but attend to them, and suffer them to sink into our hearts, nothing in this world could be a temptation to any of us to do any thing, or to neglect any thing, to the prejudice of our immortal souls.

Therefore, to conclude this discourse, whenever by any present pleasure or advantage, we are tempted to provoke God, and to destroy our own souls; let us consider what an unequal bargain we make, how little we purchase, and how much we part withal. Whenever we are solicited to any sin, let us take time to answer the question here in the text, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" &c.

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SERMON CCXLIX.

THE REASONABLENESS OF FEARING GOD MORE THAN MAN.

And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.—LUKE xii. 4, 5.

THE occasion of these words will more clearly appear, if we compare this discourse of our Saviour's, as it is here recorded by St. Luke, with that fuller account given of it by St. Matthew, chap. x. where our Saviour having called his disciples together, and given them their commission, and the rules and instructions they were to observe in the execution of it, he warns them likewise of the opposition they would meet with, and the persecution that would attend them in the faithful discharge of their duty; nevertheless, he bids them take courage, and boldly to proclaim the gospel, notwithstanding all the danger and hazard it would expose them to; but because this is very unwelcome and terrible to flesh and blood, to encounter the rage and fury of men; therefore, to strengthen their resolution and to fortify their spirits against these fears, he tells them of something much more terrible than the wrath or rage of men, viz. the anger and displeasure of God,

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that so he might chase away this lesser fear by a greater: "I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid," &c.

The words are sufficiently plain, and need no explication; only before I come to the main proposition which is contained in them, I shall take notice of these two important doctrines which are supposed in the text; the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body.

First, The immortality of the soul, which is a principle of natural religion, and not any where, that I know of, expressly asserted in Scripture; nor need it be so, being to be known by natural light, without Divine revelation: but Divine revelation did always suppose it, and take it for granted, as one of the foundations of religion. And I the rather take notice of it here, because I do not know any text from which it may be more immediately inferred, than from these words of our Saviour, which necessarily imply these two things:

1. That the soul is not obnoxious to death, as the body is. "Fear not him that can kill the body, but after that hath no more that he can do;" which St. Matthew expresseth, "cannot kill the soul."

2. That the soul remains after the death of the body. "Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell."

Secondly, Another doctrine implied in these words, is that of the resurrection of the body; which is a doctrine of pure revelation, and most clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament: and in some sort before to the Jews, who did generally believe it before our Saviour's coming, excepting the sect of the Sadducees. This is supposed in the fifth verse, "But fear him, who, after

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he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell;" not only the soul, but also to raise up the body which is killed, and to torment it in hell; for so St. Matthew hath it expressly, "But fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell." Now the body, so long as it is dead, is devoid of sense, and so incapable of torment till it be raised to life again. These being supposed, I come to the main observation contained in the words,

That God is infinitely more to be dreaded than men.

The words indeed seem to reach farther, and to be an absolute prohibition of the fear of men; but it is a Hebrew phrase and manner of speaking, when two things are opposed, to express many times those things absolutely, which are to be understood comparatively; as, (John vi. 27.) "Labour not for the meat which perisheth; but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" that is, not so much for things temporal, as things eternal, incomparably more for the one than the other. So when our Saviour says, "Fear not them that can kill the body," that is, Fear not men so much as God, fear him infinitely more. It is very lawful for us to fear men, and to stand in awe of their power, because "they can kill the body," and death is terrible: but when the power of man comes in competition with Omnipotency, and what man can do to the body in this world, with what God can do to the body and soul in the other; there is no comparison between the terror of the one and the other.

The truth of this will appear, by comparing these two objects of fear together, God and man. Fear is a passion which is most deeply rooted in our nature, and flows immediately from that principle

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of self-preservation which is planted in every man's nature. We have a natural dread and horror for every thing that may hurt us, and endanger our being and happiness: now the greatest danger is always from the greatest power; so that to make good the truth of this observation, we need do no more than compare the power of men and God, and the effects of both, and then to calculate the difference: and if there appear to be a vast and infinite difference between them, it will be evident that God is infinitely more to be dreaded than men.

First, We will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do; or rather his impotency, or what he cannot do.

Secondly, How much the power of God exceeds the power of men, and what he can do more.

First, We will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do: which our Saviour expresseth in these words, "Be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Which signifies in general, that the power of man is finite and limited, and circumscribed within certain bounds, beyond which it cannot go; something it can do, but not much; it can hurt the body, yea, and take away our life; it can "kill the body;" hither it can go, and no farther.

More particularly in these words you have man's power, what he can do; and his impotency, what he can but do, the limits and bounds of his power.

I. The power of men, and what they can do, they can "kill the body," and take away our lives; which includes a power of doing whatever is less. All those evils and persecutions which fall short of death, these they can inflict upon us, they can "revile us, and speak all manner of evil against us;"

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they can "persecute us from one city to another," and "bring us before councils," and "scourge us in their synagogues;" they can "spoil us of our goods," and "deprive us of our liberty;" they can exercise us with "bonds and imprisonments," with "cruel mockings and scourgings," with "hunger and thirst," with "cold and nakedness;" they can many ways afflict and torment us, and at last they can put us to death; all this they can do by the permission of God; here is the sum of their power; give them all advantages, let them be united and combined together. Our Saviour puts it in the plural number, "Fear not them;" and let them be backed with human authority, which our Saviour supposeth, when he speaks of bringing his disciples "before kings and governors." Thus much their powers amount to.

II. We will consider the impotency of men, which will appear in these two particulars:

1. That they cannot do this without the Divine permission.

2. That if they be permitted to do their worst, they can but do this; "after that they have no more that they can do."

1. They cannot do this without the Divine permission. The devil, though he hath a greater natural power than men, yet he could not touch Job, either in his substance or his body, without God's leave and permission. Men are apt to arrogate to themselves a great deal of power, forgetting whence they derive it, and on whom it depends. "Knowest thou not that I have the power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" said Pilate to our Saviour: but he tells him, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above,"

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(John xix. 10, 11.) All the power that men have, they have it from God, and he can check and countermand it when he pleaseth; he can "restrain the rage of men, and put a hook in their nostrils;" he can "still the noise of the sea, and the tumult of the people."

God's providence is continually vigilant over us, and unless it seem good to the Divine wisdom to permit men, they cannot touch or hurt us. It is added immediately after the text, that the providence of God extends to creatures much less considerable than we are, and to the most inconsiderable things that belong to us: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them is forgotten before God," or falls to the ground without the will of our Father; yea, the very hairs of our heads, are they not all numbered? Much more is the providence of God concerned in our lives, and the more considerable accidents and events which befal us; we are always under God's eye and care, and no man can do us the least hurt without his permission.

2. If men be permitted to do their worst, they can do but this, "they can but kill the body, after that they have no more that they can do." Now this implies several limitations of men's power, and abatements of the terror of it.

1. "They can but kill the body," that is, they can only injure the worst and least considerable part of us. The power of the devil reacheth no farther than this, this was the worst mischief his malice could devise to do to Job, to "touch his bone and his flesh," and to take away his life; and all that the fury and rage of man can do, is to wound these vile bodies, and to spurn down these houses of

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clay, whose foundations are already in the dust. But the man's soul, which is himself, that they cannot touch; though they may pierce and break the cabinet, yet they cannot seize the jewel that is in it, and get that into their power and possession; when they have broken open this cage, "our soul will escape like a bird to his mountain." Men may invent several instruments to torture and afflict the body; but no weapon can be formed against the soul, that can touch it, or do it harm.

2. When they have killed the body, by doing this, they do but prevent nature a little, they do but antedate an evil a few moments, and bring our fears upon us a little sooner; they kill that which must die within a few days, though they should let it alone; they do but cut asunder that thread which would shortly break of itself, by its own weakness and rottenness; so that, as the lepers reasoned, when the famine was in Samaria, (2 Kings vii. 3, 4.) "Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the hosts of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die;" so we may reason in this case—Why should we so much desire to sit still till we die? if men persecute us, and do their worst, we shall die; and if they do not, however we shall die; therefore let not the fear of any danger from men make us forget our duty to God, for "if they kill us, we shall but die."

3. "They can but kill the body;" and what argument of power is this, to be able to kill that which is mortal? as if you should say, They can

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break a glass, they can throw down that which is falling. This is no such wonderful effect of power, to be able to do that, which almost every thing can do, which the least thing in the world, which the poorest creature can do; a pin, or a thorn, or a grape-stone; there is hardly any thing in the whole creation so inconsiderable, but it can do this which men are apt to boast of as so great an evidence of their power. We are frail creatures, and it is no mere melancholy conceit, that we are made of glass, and as we pass through the world we are liable to be broken in pieces by the justle of a thousand accidents; every thing can lie in wait for us, and lurk privily for our lives. Men think it such an act of power to kill a man, whereas nothing is so easy. A man may be killed by another's kindness, as soon as by thy hatred; by his own excessive love, or joy, or hope, as well as by thy malice; so that it is no such instance and argument of power, to be able to "kill the body."

4. The killing of the body does not necessarily signify any great mischief or harm in the issue and event. "They can kill the body," that is, they can knock off our fetters, and open the prison doors, and set us at liberty; they can put us out of pain, thrust us out of an uneasy world, put an end to our sins and sorrows, to our misery and fears; they can "give the weary rest," and send us thither where we would be, but are loath to venture to go; they can hasten our happiness, and make way for the more speedy accomplishment of our desires, and dispatch us to heaven sooner than otherwise we should get thither; they can kill us in the cause of God, and in the discharge of our duty; that is, they can add to our happiness, and brighten our crown, and increase the weight of our glory.

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5. "They can but kill the body;" when they have done that, they may give over, here their proud waves must stop; here their cruelty and malice, their power and wit, must terminate, for they can reach no farther. When they have done all they can, they cannot annihilate us, they cannot make an utter end of us. As for the soul, they cannot come at that to do it any harm; neither the axe, nor the sword, nor the spear, nor the nail, nor any other instrument, can wound or pierce it: and as for the body, though they wound it, and bruise it, and mangle it, yet they cannot turn it into nothing; though they may banish life from it, and make it a vile and loathsome carcass, yet they cannot command it out of being, it will still maintain itself under one form or other, and after it is killed, defy any thing more that can be done to it.

6. "They can but kill the body," they cannot do the least harm to the soul, much less can they annihilate it, and make it cease to be; they cannot torment it, they cannot with all their instruments of cruelty reach and touch the spirit of a man; they cannot throw stings into the consciences and fill our minds with anguish and horror; nor can they make us torment ourselves by the racking of our own thoughts; they cannot create guilt in our minds, nor animate against us that never-dying worm, nor cast despairing thoughts, nor cause self-condemning and furious reflections in our own minds; nothing of all this are they able to do.

7. And lastly, "They can but kill the body," that is, they can but inflict temporal misery upon us; their power, as it is but small, so it is of a short continuance, it reacheth no farther than this life, it is confined to this world; so that what mischief

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men would do us, they must do it quickly, "while we are in the way." There is no plot, nor device, nor cruelty, can be practised upon us "in the grave, whither we are going." They cannot slay the dead, nor can their malice overtake those that are gone down into the pit; the longest arm, and the most inveterate hatred, cannot reach those that are got out of the land of the living. Our most powerful and deadly enemies cannot follow us beyond the grave, and pursue us into the other world. Thus Job elegantly describes the happy state of the dead, that they are out of the reach of all evil and disquiet; (Job iii. 17—19.) speaking of the grave, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master." Thus you see what the power of man is, and what the effects of it, what is the worst that he can do to us; and consequently, how much he is to be feared and regarded. I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, how much the power of God exceeds the power of man; which our Saviour declares in these words, "who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell."

Which in general signifies, that his power is infinite and unlimited. God cannot only do what man can do, but infinitely more; his power is not confined to the body, but he hath power over the spirit; he cannot only make body and soul miserable in this world, but in the other; not only for a time, but to all eternity.

More particularly in these words you have im-

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plied all those advantages which the power of God hath above the power of man. Not to insist upon that, which yet the text takes notice of, that God can do all that man can do; he can kill the body, which is implied in these words, "after he hath killed." He can blast our reputation, and ruin our estate, and afflict our bodies with the sharpest pains, and smite us with death. And God doth all that with ease, which men many times do with great labour and endeavour; they are glad to use the utmost of their wit, and power, and contrivance, to do us mischief; but God can do all things by a word: if he do but speak, judgments come: we are but a little dust, and the least breath of God can dissipate us: he hath all creatures at his command, ready to execute his will. So that whatever man, or any creature can do, that God can: and infinitely more; and this is that which I shall briefly open to you, wherein the power of God doth exceed the power of man; in these following particulars:

1. God's power is absolute, and independent upon any other; not subject to be at any time checked and controlled by a superior power, because there is none greater, none above it. "There is a higher than the highest" upon earth, and one that may say to the greatest and proudest of all the sons of men, "What doest thou?" God can forbid any man to execute his purpose, when he is most firmly resolved and determined; but when he hath a mind to manifest his power, he needeth not ask any man's leave. "Fear him that hath power," ἐξουσίαν ἔχοντα, "that hath authority;" he hath an independent power, and a sovereign right over the lives of men, because they are all his creatures, and when he will put forth his power, there is none can resist or challenge him.

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God did once force this acknowledgment from one of the greatest and proudest kings of the earth, Nebuchadnezzar: (Dan. iv. 35.) "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can say unto him, What doest thou?"

2. His power reacheth to the soul as well as the body. He can annihilate soul and body. He that brought all things into being by his word, can, with as much ease, make them vanish into nothing: as "he spake the word, and they were made;" so he can "command, and they shall not be." By the least breath of his mouth he can turn us into nothing; nay, upon the very withdrawing of those influences of his power and goodness, whereby we are maintained and supported in being, our bodies would vanish and "flee away like a shadow," and "our spirits also would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made."

And as he can annihilate the souls of men, if he please, so he can torment them. He that made our souls, and can make them happy, can likewise make them miserable; for he is a spirit, and hath power over ours; he can shoot his arrows into them, and make them stick fast there; he can wound our souls with invisible darts, and fill our spirits with secret anguish and amazement. When he sends a sword without to destroy our bodies, he can send terrors within to torment our minds; he can "distract us with terrors," as David speaks: (Psalm lxxxviii. 15.) nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and by letting loose our thoughts upon us, can make us more miserable, than all the tyrants of the world can do, by the most exquisite torments; and that in this life, as we see in the instance of

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Francis Spira. When the Father of spirits will take us under correction, he can chastise us to purpose, and make our own guilty consciences to sting and lash us, and our minds to torture themselves by furious reflections upon themselves. All this God can do in this life.

3. In the other world he can raise our bodies again, and reunite them to our souls, and cast them into hell, and torment them there. This is that which St. Matthew calls "destroying body and soul in hell." And what the misery of that state shall be, the Scripture, in the general, gives us an account, describing it to us by the greatest anguish and the most sharp and sensible bodily torments, by "the worm that dies not," that is, that guilt which shall eternally gnaw the consciences of sinners; and by "the fire which is not quenched," that is, the everlasting pains of the body.

In the other world God will raise the bodies of wicked men, and reunite them to their souls, and cast them together into hell, to be tormented there; and this is that which is called "the second death." And as tortured persons, when they are taken off the rack, have their joints new set, to be new racked again; so the bodies of wicked men shall be raised to a new life, that they may be capable of new pains.

This state of miserable men is set forth to us by the most sharp pains, and sensible torments; by the pain of burning: (Matt. xxv. 41.) "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." The rich man in the parable cried out, that he was "tormented in flames;" and, in the Revelation, the wicked are said to be "cast into a lake of fire and brimstone." Fire is the most active thing in nature, and brimstone the most combustible, to shew how quick and sharp the tor-

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ment of sinners shall be; and it shall be universal, they shall be "cast into the lake," their torments shall be sharp as that of burning, and as universal as if they were drowned in flames. And to shew how great a sense they shall have of these sufferings, the Scripture describes those who are condemned to these hideous pains, lamenting and wringing their hands, and "gnashing their teeth" for very anguish: (Matt. xxiv. 51.) "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Thus the Scripture represents to us the dismal state of the damned, possibly after this sensible manner, that it may accommodate things to our capacity: but to be sure, if these be not the very torments of hell, they shall be every whit as dreadful, as great as the terrors of God's wrath, which ill men have laid up in store for themselves, can afford; and very probably they are of that nature, and so great as not to be capable of being fully described by any thing that we are now acquainted withal: for "Who knows the power of God's anger?" Who can imagine the worst that omnipotent Justice can do to sinners? As the glory of heaven, and joys of God's presence, are now inexplicable to us, so likewise are the torments of hell, and the miseries of the damned. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of men," those dreadful things which "God hath laid up for them that" hate him.

4. Which is the most dreadful consideration of all, God can punish for ever. The wrath of man is but a blast, a storm that is soon over: all misery and torments that men can inflict, expire with this life; but the miserable effects of the Divine displeasure extend themselves to all eternity. For this reason, the judgment of God is called "an eternal

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judgment," (Heb. vi. 2.) because the sentence which shall then be passed upon men, shall assign them to an eternal state; and the punishment that, in pursuance of this sentence, shall be inflicted upon sinners, is called "an everlasting punishment:" (Matt. xxv. 46.) and the instruments of their torment are said to be everlasting: Matt. xxv. 41. it is called "everlasting fire:" and, Mark xi. 44. 46. 48. you have it there three times repeated, "where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." "The smoke of the bottomless pit" is said to "ascend for ever and ever:" (Rev. xiv. 11.) and, Rev. xx. 10. it is said, that "the wicked shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever," without intermission and without end.

It must needs be then, as the apostle says, (Heb. x. 31.) "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," that is, the God that lives for ever, because he that lives for ever, can punish for ever. And this is that which makes the great difference between the effects of the wrath of man, and the displeasure of God; the wrath of man, and the effects of it, are but for a moment; but the effects of God's displeasure extend themselves to all eternity.

By these particulars, which I have briefly gone over, you may see, who is the great object of our fear; and when you have calculated the difference between God and man, you will find that there is no proportion between the impotency of man, and the omnipotency of God; between those evils that men can inflict upon us, and "the terrors of the Lord;" and, consequently, what great reason we have to be afraid of offending God, and transgressing our duty in any kind, to avoid any temporal danger and inconvenience. But I shall not now enter upon the application of this serious and weighty argument.

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SERMON CCL.

THE REASONABLENESS OF FEARING GOD MORE THAN MAN.

And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.—LUKE xii. 4, 5.

I PROCEED now to apply this serious and weighty argument, and to draw some useful inferences from it.

I. That religion doth not design to annihilate and to root out our passions, but regulate and govern them; it does not wholly forbid and condemn them, but determines them to their proper objects, and appoints them their measures and proportions: it does not intend to extirpate our affections, but to exercise and employ them aright, and to keep them within bounds. Religion does not aim to extirpate our love, and joy, and hope, and fear; but to purify and direct them, telling us how we should love God with the highest and most intense degree of affection, as the Supreme Good deserves, "with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our minds, and with all our strength;" and other things only in subordination to him. Religion refines our joy and delight from the dregs of sensual pleasure, raising them to better objects, requiring us to "re-

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joice in the Lord evermore," and to "rejoice that our names are written in heaven:" it raiseth our hopes above the favour of men, and tells us whom we should fear above all, the great and terrible God, whose power is infinitely above the power of men. Now that which propounds objects to our passions, and sets bounds to them, did never intend the utter extirpation of them; but this religion doth.

II. We may infer likewise from hence, that it is not against the genius of true religion, to urge men with arguments of fear. No man can imagine there would have been so many fearful threatenings in Scripture, and especially in the gospel, if it had not been intended they should have some effect and influence upon us. Some look upon all arguments of fear as legal, and gendering to bondage, as contrary to the genuine spirit and temper of the gospel; and look upon preachers, who urge men with considerations taken from the justice of God, and "the terrors of the Lord," as of an unevangelical spirit, as the "children of the bondwoman, and not of the free;" as those who would bring men back again to Mount Sinai, to "thunder and lightning," to "blackness, and darkness, and tempest." But will such men allow our Saviour and his apostles to have been evangelical preachers? If so, it is not contrary to the gospel to use arguments of terror; they thought them very proper to deter men from sin, and to bring them to repentance: (Acts xvii. 30, 31.) "But now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." And the same apostle tells us, that one principal thing which made the gospel so powerful for the salvation of men, was the terrible threatenings of it, because

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"therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," (Rom. i. 18.) And (2 Cor. v. 10.) the apostle puts Christians in mind of the judgment of Christ: "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." And, lest any should doubt whether this were a proper argument to work upon Christians under the gospel, he tells us, that he mentioned it for this very purpose, (ver. 11.) "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

Some are so tender, that they cannot bear any other arguments but such as are taken from the free grace of God, and the free love of Christ. If we mention to them the wrath of God, and the torments of hell, we grate upon them; but if we consider the primitive preaching of Christ and his apostles, and will be concluded by their pattern, we must allow the necessity and usefulness of these arguments.

And, indeed, if we consider the nature and reason of things, nothing is more apt to work upon sinners than arguments of fear. Hence it is that the wisdom of mankind hath thought fit to secure the observance of human laws by the fear of punishment. Fear is deeply rooted in our nature, and immediately flows from that principle of self-preservation which is planted in every man; it is the most wakeful passion in the soul of man, and so soon as any thing that is dreadful and terrible is presented to us, it alarms us to flee from it: and this passion doth naturally spring up in our minds from the apprehension of a Deity, because the notion of a God doth include in it power and justice, both which are terrible to guilty creatures; so that fear is intimate to our being, and God hath hid in

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every man's conscience a secret awe and dread of his presence, of his infinite power and eternal justice.

Now fear being one of the first things that is imprinted upon us from the apprehension of a Deity, it is that passion, which, above all other, gives the greatest advantage to religion, and is the easiest to be wrought upon. Hence the wise man does so often call "the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom," because here usually religion begins, and first takes hold of this passion: (Prov. xvi. 6.) "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." Fear is a good sure principle, and one of the best guards and securities against sin: other passions are fickle and inconstant, but we cannot shake off our fears, nor quit ourselves of them, so long as we believe the reality of the object; there will be fear and terror in a guilty conscience, so long as it believes a holy, just, and omnipotent God, and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Other passions are more under the government of reason, as our love, and hope, and anger: but fear is the most natural, and most deeply rooted in the sensitive nature, and therefore is common to us with all other creatures, who have any considerable degree of sense, or any other passion: and we may observe those creatures, who scarce betray any other passion, to be fearful of danger, and to flee from it. Now fear having less to do with reason, the effects of it are less to be hindered. All the reason in the world cannot command down our fears, unless the danger be removed, or some probable way shewn of avoiding or mastering it; and therefore arguments of fear are great eloquence, and

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have a mighty force and power of persuasion. "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, (saith St. Paul) we persuade men." One of the best sort of arguments to fright men from sin, and to bring them to their duty, is, "the terrors of the Lord." These take the fastest and surest hold of men, even of the most obstinate and obdurate sinners; for arguments of love and kindness will work but little upon such persons; some ingenuity is required to be swayed by such considerations: but the perversest creatures love themselves, and may be wrought upon by arguments of fear: so that it is agreeable both to the nature of man and of religion, to propound such arguments to our consideration.

III. The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of men. We are very apt to be awed by men, and to start from our duty for fear of temporal evils and sufferings. This fear seized upon St. Peter, and made him deny his Master. And where the fear of men does not prevail so far, yet it will many times make men shy and timorous in the owning of religion in the times of danger. This made Nicodemus to come to our Saviour "by night." (John iii. 2.) So, likewise, "many of the rulers," who "believed in Christ," durst not "make open confession of him, lest they should have been put out of the synagogue," (John xii. 42.) Some men that have good inclinations to the truth, and are inwardly convinced of it, yet in times of danger they love to be wise and cautious: they have an eye to a retreat, and are loath to venture too far. But if we give way to these fears, and suffer them to possess us, we shall be exposed to many temptations, and be liable to be seduced from our duty. So Solomon

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observes, (Prov. xxix. 25.) " The fear of man bringeth a snare."

Now if we would cast out this fear of men, it must be by a greater fear, which is stronger and more powerful; and that is the fear of God, (Isa. viii. 12, 13.) " Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid;" speaking of the fear of men, against which he prescribes this remedy, " Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." If God be once the object of our fear, and we be thoroughly possessed with awful apprehensions of him, the frowns of men, and the wrath and displeasure of the greatest upon earth, will signify nothing to us. This preserved Moses amidst all the temptations of a court: (Heb. xi. 27.) " He feared not the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He could easily bear the anger of Pharaoh, when by faith he beheld the omnipotent justice of " the King immortal and invisible."

IV. If God be infinitely more to be dreaded than men, then " who is to be obeyed, God or men? judge ye." I speak not this to diminish our reverence to magistrates, and their authority; for by persuading men to fear God, who commands obedience to magistrates, we secure their reverence and authority: but when the commands of men are contrary to God's, and come in competition with them, shall we not hearken to him who is supreme, the greatest and most powerful? shall we not obey him who hath the most questionable authority over us, and right to command us? Shall we not dread him most, who is to be feared above all; who can be the best friend, and the sorest enemy; is able to give the greatest rewards to our obedience, and to revenge

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himself upon us for our disobedience, by the most dreadful and severe punishments? The great Socrates, when he was accused by the Athenians for corrupting and seducing the youth of Athens by his philosophy, makes this generous defence for himself, more like an apostle than a philosopher—"That he believed this province was committed to him by God, that he was called by him to this employment, to endeavour to reform the world; and therefore for him to forsake his station for fear of death, or of any other temporal evil, would be a most grievous sin." And afterwards (as Plato gives us the account of it) he says, "I am not afraid to die: but this I am afraid of, to disobey the commands of my Superior, and to desert the station he hath placed me in, and to give over the work which he hath appointed me; and therefore, (says he,) if you would dismiss me upon these conditions, that I would forbear for the future to instruct the people, and if after this I be found so doing, I should be put to death; if I might be released upon these terms, I would not accept them; I would thank you for your good-will, but this I must affirm to you, that I ought to obey God rather than you; and so long as I have breath, I will never give over exhorting and teaching the people, and inculcating the precepts of philosophy upon every one I meet with."

Could a heathen, who had but very obscure apprehensions of the rewards of another life, in comparison of what Christians have by the revelation of the gospel; could he take up this brave resolution, and die in it? Did he with so much constancy despise the wrath and reproaches of men, and with so much cheerfulness entertain death, rather than to

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flinch from his duty? How does this upbraid the cowardice of many Christians, who are so easily deterred from their duty, and are apt to quit their religion for fear of sufferings; since "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel," and the wrath of God is so clearly revealed from heaven! What a folly is it for any man to "choose iniquity rather than affliction," as the expression is in Job; and to forfeit the favour of God for the friendship of the world!

The fear of men will not be a sufficient plea and excuse for men at the day of judgment; it will not then be enough to say, This I was awed into by the apprehension of such a danger, by the fear of such sufferings; to avoid such an inconvenience, I knowingly committed such a sin; for fear of being persecuted, I violated my conscience, and chose rather to trust God with my soul, than men with my estate; to save my life, I renounced my religion, was "ashamed of Christ, and denied him before men." Our Saviour hath told us plainly, that this will not serve us at the great day: (Mark viii. 38.) "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels." And (Rev. xxi. 8.) in that catalogue of sinners which shall be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," the fearful and unbelievers are particularly mentioned.

And, indeed, they who out of fear of men offend God, are guilty of this unreasonable folly, they incur the danger of a greater evil to avoid a less, and to save their estates or their lives, they plunge themselves into hell; whilst they are endeavouring

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to escape the hands of "men that shall die, they fall into the hands of the living God."

Lastly, If God be the great object of our fear, let all impenitent sinners represent to themselves "the terrors of the Lord, and the power of his anger." This consideration, if any thing in the world will do it, will awaken them to a sense of the danger of their condition, and of the fatal issue of a wicked life. Were but men possessed with due apprehensions of the power of God; the fear of men, and what they can do to us, would have no influence upon us in comparison of the fears of Divine vengeance. Were we sensible what it is to displease God, "in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways," who can make us as miserable as we are capable of being, and more miserable than we can now imagine, not only in our bodies, but in our souls, not only in this world, but in the other, not only for a time, but without end; would not this make us afraid to offend and displease him?

Can any consideration be more powerful to restrain us from sin, and to argue us to repentance and obedience, than this? We may oppose the eternal displeasure of God, not only to all the pleasures of sin, but to all the terrors of sense, which are but for a moment. When men would allure us to sin by the baits and temptations of pleasure, or discourage and deter us from our duty by the threatenings of danger and sufferings; let us oppose to these the anger of the great God, and the infinite treasures of his wrath; and the serious thoughts of these will blunt the edge of all temptations, and quench all motives and incentives to sin.

Do we fear the wrath of man, whose power is short, "and whose breath is in his nostrils," who

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can but afflict a little, and for a little while; and is not the wrath of the eternal God much more dreadful? Is not "destruction from the Lord, a terror to thee?" Dost thou "fear man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass;" and dost thou stand in no awe of "Him who lives for ever?" Is the fear of men so prevalent upon us, and shall not "the terrors of the Lord" have a much greater effect upon us? God is the supreme, and indeed the only object of our fear, in comparison of whom nothing else is to be dreaded: (Psalm lxxvi. 7.) "Thou, even thou, art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?" And, (Psalm xc. 11.) "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? As is thy fear, so is thy wrath." No passion in the soul of man is more infinite and unbounded than our fear; it is apt to fill our minds with endless jealousies and suspicions of what may befal us, of the worst that may happen: but if we should extend our fears to the utmost of what our wild and affrighted imaginations can reach to, they could not exceed the greatness of God's wrath: "As is thy fear, so is thy wrath."

Let us then consider things impartially, and fear him most who hath the greatest power, and consequently whom of all other persons in the world it is most dangerous to offend. Let us set before us God and men; the single death of the body, and the sorest and most sensible torments of body and soul together; temporal afflictions and sufferings, and eternal pains and sorrows: and when we are apt to fear what men can do unto us, let us consider how much more he can do, to whom power belongs, if for fear of men we will venture to provoke him. When men threaten us with a prison, let us think

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of "the chains of darkness;" when they would terrify us with fire and faggot, let us think of "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone;" when we are threatened with banishment, let us consider how great a misery it will be to be banished from the glorious and blissful presence of God for ever: when the danger of a temporal death is presented to us, let us remember the "worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched."

Ye that are so bold as to offend God, and affront the Almighty to his face, by profane blasphemies, and impudent impiety, consider what ye do, how great a danger you run upon, to what fearful misery you expose yourselves, whenever you thus offend him! think of that question of the apostle, and answer it if you can; "Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?" Take warning on this side hell, while ye may escape it; "flee from the wrath which is to come," while it is yet to come, before it overtake you, and there be no escaping!

And let it not be grievous to us, to be put in mind of those terrible things. How much easier is it now to hear of them, while they may be avoided, than to endure them hereafter, when they will be both unavoidable and intolerable! And look upon them as the best and most faithful friends, who deal plainly with you in these matters, and acquaint you with the true state of things, and tell you nothing but what you will certainly find true, if you persist in this dangerous course of offending God; who represent things to you as they are, and forewarn you of so great and certain a danger.

It is no pleasure to any man to speak of such dreadful and tragical things; it can be no delight to fright men, and to grate upon their ears with such

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harsh and unwelcome words: but it is necessary to the greatest part of sinners, to set their danger before them in the most terrible and frightful manner; and all this is little enough to awaken the greatest part of mankind to due consideration of their ways. Soft words, and sober reason, and calm arguing, will work upon some persons; some sinners are more yielding, and may be taken in upon parley; but others are so obstinate and resolved, that they are not to be carried but by storm; and in this case, violence is the greatest act of friendship and kindness. Our Saviour, when he spake these terrible words to his disciples, and gave them this warning, does insinuate, that it proceeded from a most sincere and hearty friendship to them: "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear," &c.

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SERMON CCLI.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER FOR OBTAINING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—LUKE xi. 13.

THE great advantages which we have by the Christian religion, are these three:

1. A more perfect rule for the direction of our lives.

2. A more powerful assistance to enable us to the performance of our duty. And,

3. The assurance of a glorious and an eternal reward.

And all these are contained in that excellent sermon of our blessed Saviour upon the mount: of which this passage in St. Luke is a part, although it was spoken here by our Saviour upon another occasion, and at another time.

Our Saviour begins that sermon with the last of these, as being the great motive and encouragement to our duty—the promise of blessedness, and of a great reward in heaven.

And then he lays down the rule which was the substance of those moral duties, which are contained in the law and the prophets; only he explains and supplies whatever was obscure and defective before, and thereby brings our duty to a greater certainty, and clearness, and perfection, than it had before.

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But, because this would have signified little to us, if we be still unable to perform our duty, and to obey that law which God hath given us, and to the obedience whereof he hath promised so great a reward: therefore, that nothing might be wanting to excite and encourage our obedience, our blessed Saviour, after he had made our duty as strict as possible, lest we should faint and be discouraged under an apprehension of the impossibility, or extreme difficulty of performing what he requires of us, is pleased to promise an assistance equal to the difficulty of our duty, and our inability of ourselves to perform it; knowing that we are without strength, and that nothing is a greater discouragement to men from attempting any thing, than an apprehension that they have not sufficient strength to go through with it, not being able of themselves alone to do it, and despairing of assistance from any other.

And this is the great discouragement that most men lie under, as to the business of religion; they are conscious to themselves of their own weakness, and not sufficiently persuaded of the Divine assistance; like the lame man in the gospel, that lay at the pool of Bethesda to be healed; he was not able to go in himself, and none took that pity on him as to help him in.

Hence it comes to pass, that a great many are disheartened from engaging in the ways of religion; because some spies, those who have only taken a superficial view of religion, have brought up an evil report upon that good land, which they pretend to have searched, saying, as they of old did when they returned from searching the land of Canaan, (Numb. xiii. 31—33.) "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they

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brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Just thus we are apt to misrepresent religion to ourselves, as if the difficulties of it were insupportable, and the enemies which we are to encounter were infinitely too strong for us; not considering, that the Lord is with us, and notwithstanding our own impotency and weakness, yet, by his strength, we may be (as St. Paul expresseth it) more than conquerors.

Therefore, to remove this discouragement, and to put life into the endeavours of men, our blessed Saviour assures us, that God is ready to assist us, and to supply our weakness and want of strength by a power from above, even by giving us his Holy Spirit, which is "a Spirit of might, and of power, and of the fear of the Lord," as he is called by the prophet; and he is ready to bestow so great a gift upon us on the easiest terms and conditions imaginable; if we will but ask this blessing of him, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

"How much more;" which words are an argument from the less to the greater, by which our Saviour, from the confidence which children naturally have in the goodness of their earthly parents, that they will not deny them things necessary and convenient for them, if they earnestly beg them at their hands, argues Christians into a great confidence of the good-will of their heavenly Father, and

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of his readiness to give "his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

The force of which argument depends upon a double comparison, of the quality of the persons giving, and of the nature of the gift.

1. The quality of the persons giving. Fathers upon earth, and our heavenly Father. If earthly fathers be naturally disposed to give good things to their children, how much more may we believe this of our heavenly Father! If they who are but men have so much goodness; how much more confidently may we presume it of God, who excels in all perfections, and whose goodness excels all his other perfections! If they who are evil, that is, many times envious, and ill-natured, and at the best but imperfectly good; how much more God, who is infinitely good, and even goodness itself! If they who are many times indigent, or but meanly provided of the good things they bestow, and if they give them to their children must want them themselves; how much more God, who is not the less rich and full for the overflowings of his bounty, and can never impair his estate, nor impoverish himself by conferring of his blessings and benefits upon others!

2. If we compare the nature of the gifts. If earthly parents, that are evil, be ready to bestow good things upon their children, things necessary and convenient only for their bodies and this life; how much more confidently may we believe the good God inclined to bestow upon his children the best things, things necessary for their souls, and conducing to their eternal life and happiness!

So that, in the handling of these words, I shall,

First, Endeavour to shew what is comprehended in this gift of the Holy Spirit, and how great a blessing and benefit it is.

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Secondly, What kind of asking is here required.

Thirdly, To confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, that God is very ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Fourthly, To remove a considerable objection to which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, To make some practical application of it to ourselves.

First, I shall shew what is comprehended in this gift of the Holy Spirit, and how great a blessing and benefit it is. St. Matthew expresseth this somewhat differently: (chap. vii. 11.) "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Which, compared with the expression here in St. Luke, doth intimate to us, that the Spirit of God is the chief of blessings, or rather the sum of all good things. The promise here in the text is not expressed so generally as it is in St. Matthew; but our evangelist instanceth in the greatest gift that God can bestow upon his children; the gift of his Holy Spirit, which is indeed the chief of all other, the sum and comprehension of all spiritual blessings; for it contains in it the presence and residence, the continual influence and assistance, of God's Holy Spirit upon the minds of men, together with all the blessed fruits and effects of it, in the sanctifying and renewing of our hearts in all those particular graces and virtues, which are in Scripture called "the fruits of the Spirit; in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," in "sealing us up to the day of redemption," and in being a pledge of our future inheritance, and of a blessed resurrection to eternal life. All these are mentioned in Scripture, as the fruits and effects of God's Holy Spirit, and therefore

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it will come within the compass of this promise concerning the gift of God's Spirit; "How much more shall your heavenly Father," &c.

And, which I desire may be especially considered, because it will conduce very much to the clearing of some difficulties in my following discourse, by the gift of God's Holy Spirit, is not only meant the common and transient operations of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, exciting and disposing them to that which is good; (for thus the Spirit was given to men in all ages from the beginning of the world;) but the special presence and residence, the permanent and continued influence and conduct, of God's Holy Spirit, as a constant and powerful principle of spiritual life and activity in good men; in which sense the Scripture tells us, that the Holy Ghost resides and dwells in believers, that they "live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit:" for this phrase, of the giving of the Holy Ghost, or of God's Spirit, does always (I think) in the New Testament signify either the miraculous and extraordinary gifts conferred upon the apostles and primitive Christians, in order to the effectual planting and propagating of the gospel; (and so it is used, Acts v. 32. where St. Peter says, that the "Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," was "a witness of the resurrection and ascension of our Saviour;" that is, gave testimony and confirmation thereto;) or else for the special residence, and continual influence and assistance, of God's Holy Spirit in and upon the minds of good men. And so we find this phrase frequently used: (Rom. v. 5.) "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us;" meaning, for the strengthening and assist-

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ance of believers to all patience and long-suffering under the persecutions which attended them; for so the apostle reasons, "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" that is, for our support and assistance under sufferings. So, likewise, 1 Thess. iv. 8. where defiling of our bodies by lust, is called "a despising of God, who hath given unto us his Holy Spirit;" that is, "to dwell in us:" for which reason the same apostle calls our bodies "the temples of the Holy Ghost," and "of God:" (1 Cor. iii. 16.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And, (chap. vi. 19.) "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?"

And (1 John iii. 24.) God is said to give us his Spirit to enable us to keep his commandments; "He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." And, (chap. iv. 13.) "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." So that the gift of God's Spirit doth imply his continual residence in good men; and his powerful assistance of them to all the purposes of holiness and obedience; and not only a transient operation upon the minds of men, by some good motions and suggestions, which is common to bad men, and those who are in a sinful and unregenerate state.

Secondly, We shall in the next place consider,

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what kind of asking, in order to the obtaining of this great blessing, is here required by our Saviour, when he says, " God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." It must have these three qualifications:

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking.

2. It must be earnest, and fervent, and importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and careless asking.

3. It must be in faith, and a confident assurance that God will hear us, in opposition to doubting and distrust.

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking. When we pray for God's grace and Holy Spirit, we must not be " as the hypocrites are," who pray not so much to be heard of God, as " to be seen of men;" who have no sense of their wants, no hearty desires to obtain those blessings which they beg of God, but only pray out of form and custom, or for ostentation of their piety and devotion. It is not every prayer that is put up to God out of form and custom that will prevail with God, for the assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit; but it must be serious and in good earnest; it must proceed from a true and real sense of our need of God's Holy Spirit, such a sense as children have of their want of bread when they are pinched with hunger.

2. This asking must be earnest, and fervent, and importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and indifferent asking: because this declares the sincerity of our desires. Those things which we are careless and indifferent about, and do not much matter whether we have them or not, we ask them

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coldly, and but seldom; if they be not granted at the first asking, we give them over, and look no farther after them: but those things which we heartily desire, and are truly sensible of our want of them, we will use more earnestness and importunity for the obtaining of them; and if we cannot obtain them at first, we will renew our requests, be instant and urgent for them, and if there be any hopes, never give over till we have prevailed.

And that in this manner we ought to beg of God his Holy Spirit, our Saviour declares in those metaphors which he useth of asking, and seeking, and knocking, which signify earnestness, and diligence, and importunity: (ver. 9, 10.) "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." And we have this more plainly declared in the parable before the text, (ver. 5—8.) "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise, and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." If mere impudence and importunity in asking, will prevail so much with men, what will not humble and constant supplication obtain from God? And so our Saviour applies this familiar parable, that, in like

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manner, we should be importunate with God for spiritual blessings, and as it were give him no rest, till we obtain what we ask, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you," &c. Not that mere importunity prevails with God; but as it is an expression of a just sense of our wants, and of a confident persuasion of God's goodness, so it is effectual to procure the greatest blessings at God's hands.

3. We must ask in faith, and a confident assurance that God will hear us, in opposition to doubting and distrust; with the same, nay, with greater confidence and assurance than children come to their earthly parents, to ask those things of them that are most necessary for them. And this condition or qualification of our prayers our Saviour doth elsewhere frequently require: (Matt. xxi. 22.) "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And St. James, (chap. i. 5, 6.) directing those who want spiritual wisdom to ask it of God, immediately subjoins, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering;" that is, not doubting but that God, to whom he addresseth his prayer, is both able and willing to give him what he asks: and whoever comes to God, not having this apprehension of him, "let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord," (ver. 7.) For upon what ground does he expect any thing from that person, whom he looks upon either as unable or unwilling to grant his desires? I proceed, in the

Third place, To confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, that God is very ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. And for the proof of this, I shall only use two arguments—from God's free promise and declaration; and from the comparison which our Saviour here useth in the text.

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1. From God's free promise and declaration. And besides that here in the text, I might produce several others, but I shall mention only one, which is very plain and express, and conceived in terms as large and universal as can well be devised: (James i. 5.) "If any of you (says the apostle, speaking of Christians) lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Where by wisdom, according to St. James's notion of it, is meant all "the fruits of the Spirit," all Christian graces; for so he tells us, (chap. iii. 17.) that "the wisdom which is from above," that is, which is wrought by the Divine Spirit, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits." Now if God have freely promised so great a blessing and benefit to men, if they earnestly beg it of him, we need not doubt of his faithfulness to perform and make good what he hath promised.

2. The other argument, which I shall principally insist upon, shall be from the comparison which our Saviour here useth in the text: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" This is a proverbial speech among the Jews, which seems from them to have been derived to the neighbour nations, as appears from that of Plautus: *Alterâ manu fert lapidem, alterâ panem ostentat*, "He carries a stone in one hand, and holds forth bread in the other." If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" That is, if he ask that which is absolutely necessary, will he give him that which will do him no good? "Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" That is, if he ask that, which,

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though it be not absolutely necessary, yet may be very convenient; will he give him that which is hurtful and pernicious? hardly any earthly parent, though otherwise never so bad, would deal thus with his children; and can we suspect it of God? certainly it is much farther from him to deny us, his children, those better and more necessary good things, which we humbly and heartily and earnestly beg of him, in a confident persuasion of his goodness.

"If ye then, being evil (many times bad enough in other respects, and at the best come infinitely short of God in point of benignity and goodness) know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

This is a plain and undeniable argument, fitted to all capacities, because it proceeds upon two suppositions which every man must acknowledge to be true.

1. That earthly parents have generally such a natural affection for their children, as does strongly incline them to give them such good things as are necessary and convenient for them, and which will not suffer them, instead of good things, to give them such things as either are no wise useful, or any wise hurtful to them: this is a matter of common, and certain, and sensible experience, which no man can deny.

2. The other supposition, which is as evident in reason as the former is in experience, is this: that God is better than men, and that there is infinitely more goodness in him than in the best man in the world; because goodness in its most exalted degree, and highest perfection, is essential to that notion which all men have of God; and this being a com-

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mon principle, in which men are universally agreed, no man can gainsay it.

Now let but these two things be supposed, that men, though otherwise evil, yet commonly have so much of natural goodness and affection for their children, as to be ready to give them those things which are good for them; and that God is infinitely more liberal and bountiful than men; and it will appear to be a thing highly credible, that this good God will not deny the best of gifts, even his Holy Spirit, to them that ask him.

But, for the farther illustration of this argument, we will consider a little more particularly the terms of the comparison which our Saviour here useth; our earthly and our heavenly Father; temporal and spiritual good things.

1. Our earthly and our heavenly Father; in which terms the givers are compared together. Now there are three considerations in a giver, which make him capable of being bountiful, and dispose him to it.

(1.) That he have wherewithal to be liberal, and can part with it without damage and prejudice to himself.

(2.) That he be good-natured, and have a mind to give.

(3.) That he be related to those to whom he gives, and be concerned in their welfare. Now all these considerations are more eminently in God, and with far greater advantage, than in any father upon earth. For,

(1.) God hath wherewithal to be liberal, and can confer what benefits he pleaseth, without any harm or prejudice to himself. Earthly parents cannot many times be so good to their children as they de-

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sire, because they have it not to bestow; they cannot perhaps feed them plentifully without pinching themselves, nor give them fit provision without impoverishing themselves: but the Divine nature is a perpetual and inexhaustible spring of all good things, even of more than he can communicate; in him are all the treasures of riches, and power, and wisdom, and he cannot by giving to others, ever empty or impoverish himself: when he makes the freest communications of his goodness to his creatures, he does not thereby diminish and lessen his native store.

(2.) God hath infinitely more goodness than men, he hath stronger propensions and inclinations to do good, than are to be found in the best-natured and most generous man in the world. All the goodness that is in the creature is derived from God, who is the fountain and original of it; it is but an imperfect image, and imperfect representation of that excellency and perfection which the Divine nature is possessed of in the highest degree that can be imagined. Men are many times evil and envious (for so the word signifies, "If ye being evil," πονηροὶ, of an envious, niggardly, and illiberal disposition); but, at the best, men are of a finite and limited goodness and perfection.

But now no such thing as envy and ill-will can possibly happen to God, who is so rich in his own native store, and so secure of the enjoyment of what he hath, that he can neither hope for the enlargement, nor fear the impairing, of his estate.

(3.) God hath a nearer and more intimate relation to us than our earthly parents, and is more concerned for our happiness. Our earthly parents are but the "fathers of our flesh," as the apostle speaks,

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(Heb. xii. 9.) but God is "the Father of our spirits." Nay, in respect of our very bodies, God hath the greatest hand in framing of us; it is he who "made us in secret, and curiously wrought us in the lowest parts of the earth: in his book all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned:" (Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16.) so that we being God's creatures, our bodies the work of his hands, and our souls the breath of his mouth, God is more our Father than he that begat us, and having a nearer and stronger relation to us, hath a greater care and concernment for our happiness.

So that if our earthly parents, who are many times indigent and ill-natured, and are but "the fathers of our flesh," and that but as second causes in subordination to God, the principal Author of our beings, I say, if they will "give good things to their children;" how much more shall our "heavenly Father," who is the fountain of all good, and goodness itself, who is our Creator, the framer of our bodies, and "the Father of our spirits," be more ready to bestow on us the best things we can beg of him?

2. Let us compare likewise temporal and spiritual good things; in which terms you have the gifts compared together. Now there are two considerations belonging to a gift, which are apt to move and incline a person to bestow it; if it be such as is necessary or very convenient for the person on whom it is bestowed; and if it be such as the person that bestows it takes great pleasure and delight in the imparting of it.

(1.) If it be such as is necessary or very convenient for those on whom it is bestowed. Such is bread, which earthly parents give to their children; but that is only necessary to the body, and for the sup-

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port of this frail and temporary life: but the Holy Spirit of God is necessary to the life and health of our souls, to our eternal life and happiness. Now our soul being ourselves, and eternity the most considerable duration, God's Holy Spirit is consequently much more necessary and convenient for us, than any thing that our earthly parents can give us.

(2.) The Spirit of God is such a gift as he takes the greatest pleasure and delight in the imparting and bestowing of it. What can be more acceptable to God, than that his children should be made partakers of his own Divine nature, and conformed to his image; than that we should be "holy as God is holy, and renewed after the image of him that hath created us in righteousness and true holiness?" than that human nature should be restored to its primitive perfection and dignity, and recovered to that state in which it came out of God's hands? than to see the ruin and decay of his own workmanship repaired; and his creatures, that were become miserable by the temptation of the devil, restored to happiness by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God?

And this is the proper work of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, to sanctify and renew us, and (as the apostle expresseth it) "to create us again unto good works," to make us "partakers of his own holiness," and to restore our souls to that condition that "his soul may have pleasure in us." What can we imagine more acceptable to God, than that men should be brought to this happy state and temper? A child does not please his father so much when he desires to be instructed by him in learning and virtue, as we please God when we ask his Holy Spirit of him: for nothing can be more pleasing to him, than to bestow this best of gifts upon us.

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So that the whole force of the argument comes to this: that if we believe that earthly parents have any good inclinations toward their children, and are willing to bestow upon them the necessaries of life, we have much more reason to believe that God our heavenly Father is much more ready "to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him;" whether we consider the quality of the giver, or the nature of the gift.

I should now have proceeded to the other particulars which I propounded; but I shall only at present make some short reflections upon what hath already been delivered.

What a comfortable consideration is this, to be so fully assured of God's readiness to bestow all good things upon his children, and even his Holy Spirit, if we ask it of him! and what an encouragement is here to constant and fervent prayer to God, who will not deny us the gift of his Holy Spirit, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him! and what an encouragement is here likewise to the resolutions and endeavours of a good life, that so powerful an assistance is so freely offered to us, to enable us to "run the ways of God's commandments!" that God hath promised his Holy Spirit to reside and dwell in us, to be a principle of spiritual life to us, and to enable us to all the purposes of obedience and a holy life!

And what infinite cause have we to bless God for the gift of his Holy Spirit, and to say with St. Paul, "Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!" That he hath given his Holy Spirit to his church, at first in miraculous powers and gifts for the preaching of the Christian religion in the world, and ever since in such degrees of assistance, as were necessary in the several ages of the church, for the preservation of the Christian religion in the world; that he hath given his

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Holy Spirit to every particular member of his church, for the sanctifying and renewing of our natures, "to strengthen us to every good word and work, and to keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation!"

And this sanctifying virtue of the Holy Ghost, enabling us to do the will of God, is more than any miraculous powers whatsoever. So our Saviour tells us: (Matt. vii. 21—23.) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Men may do wonders by the power of the Holy Ghost, and yet be shut out of the kingdom of heaven; only they that are assisted by the Spirit of God to do the will of God, shall be admitted into heaven.

And this is matter of greater joy and comfort to us, than to work the greatest wonders, and to have power over devils, to cast them out of the bodies of men: (Luke x. 20.) "Rejoice not in this, (saith our blessed Saviour,) that the spirits are made subject to you; but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven." How is that? The sanctifying virtue of God's Spirit is the pledge and earnest of our heavenly inheritance, and that whereby we are "sealed to the day of redemption."

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SERMON CCLII.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER, FOR OBTAINING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—LUKE xi. 13.

IN discoursing on these words, I proposed,

First, To endeavour to shew what is comprehended in the gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned in my text, and how great a blessing and benefit it is.

Secondly, What kind of asking is here required.

Thirdly, To confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, That God is very ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Fourthly, To remove a considerable objection, to which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, To make some practical application of it to ourselves.

The three former of these I have dispatched, and shall now proceed to the

Fourth thing which I propounded, which was, to remove an objection to which this discourse may seem liable; the removal whereof will conduce very much to the clearing this argument, about which men seem to have had very confused apprehensions. The objection is this—That none can ask the Spirit aright, but they that have the Spirit; and if this be so, then this large declaration of God's goodness and readiness to bestow the Holy Spirit upon them that ask him comes to nothing; for a promise signifies nothing, which confers a benefit on a person upon

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a condition impossible by him to be performed, unless he first have the benefit which is promised; and, to use a familiar comparison, if this were the meaning of it, it would be like a father's jesting with his child, when he is fallen, and bidding him come to him, and he will help him up. Now if God thus promise his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, with this reservation, that no man can ask God's Spirit unless he have it, then this promise amounts to nothing.

And that no man can ask God's Spirit without his Spirit, (that is, put up any prayer that is acceptable to God, without the assistance of God's Spirit,) seems to me in effect generally granted by those who assert, that no unregenerate man can pray to God aright, or perform any other duties of religion in an acceptable manner; for to be unregenerate, and not to have the Spirit of God, are equivalent expressions in Scripture; St. Paul having expressly told us, that "if any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his;" that is, does not belong to him, as every regenerate person most certainly does.

Besides that the Scripture tells us, that all the prayers, and all the sacrifices, that is, all religious duties performed by a wicked man, are "an abomination to the Lord:" because no prayer can be acceptable to God, which does not proceed from sincerity, and is not put up to God in faith; now sincerity and faith are graces proper to the regenerate.

So that the objection in short is this: How can any man that hath not the Spirit of God, ask any thing of God aright, that is, sincerely, fervently, and in faith? And if without God's Spirit, no man can beg his Spirit of him, what then signifies this pro-

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mise, that God will "give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

For the satisfaction of this objection, I shall lay down these propositions, which, if they be well considered, will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter:

First, That in the interpretation of promises and conditions annexed to them, we ought above all things to take heed, that we do not so interpret either the promise, or condition, as to make the promise void, and of none effect; for this cannot be done without a notorious affront to him that made the promise, who is presumed, if he were serious and sincere, to have intended a real benefit and advantage by his promise. And this rule holds not only in the interpretation of promises, but of all covenants and contracts; *in omni interpretatione pactorum, contractuum et promissorum, illud præcipue cavendum, ne in vanum recidant;* "in the interpretation of all covenants, and contracts, and promises, we are principally to take care, that we do not so interpret them as to make them signify nothing:" and if this hold among men, much more ought we to be cautious and tender of interpreting the promises of God to a vain and trifling sense; for we cannot dishonour the goodness and veracity of God more, than to suppose that he mocks men by his promises, and makes a show and offer of a benefit, when he really intends none; for all such proceedings as would be unbecoming the sincerity and integrity of a good man, are to be removed at the greatest distance from God, "all whose ways are faithfulness and truth, who is not as man, that he should lie, or as the son of man, that he should repent."

Secondly, I do not see but if this were the true

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sense and meaning of these words of our Saviour, that though God will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," yet none but those who have the Spirit of God can ask it of him; I say, I do not see but that it must necessarily be granted, that such a promise as this amounts to nothing; because, according to this interpretation of it, the benefit promised would be suspended upon a condition which no man can perform, unless he be first partaker of the benefit; which is, in plain English, to promise to bestow a thing upon a man on this condition, that he first have the thing which I promise to bestow upon him, which signifies just nothing, but is lusory and trifling, and consequently not to be imagined to be the meaning of a Divine promise. There cannot be a greater absurdity in divinity, than to put such a sense upon the promises of God, as does plainly evacuate them, and make them of none effect. This be far from us, as the apostle says upon another occasion; "Shall we make the promises of God of none effect? God forbid!"

And whereas it is commonly said, that the meaning of our Saviour's promise here in the text is this, that those who have the Spirit of God already, if they ask a greater measure of it, he will not deny it to them; though this be true in itself, that God will not deny greater degrees of the grace and assistance of his Holy Spirit to them that beg it of him, and may by a just parity of reason be inferred from this promise, or contained in it as a part of the meaning of it, yet to make this the whole meaning of it, seems to be a very forced and unreasonable limitation of these general words, wherein this promise is conceived; for if we look back to the 10th verse, the words are as general as could well be devised; "Every one that asketh, receiveth;

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and every one that seeketh, findeth;" and containing matter of favour and benefit, they ought in reason to be extended and enlarged as far as may be, but by no means to be restrained without evident reason. Now so far is there from being any evident reason for this, that there seems to me to be an invincible one to the contrary, why they should not be thus restrained, and that is this: if this promise of our Saviour's were thus to be limited; then all other promises of the like nature, ought in like manner to be interpreted; which cannot be without manifest violence and self-contradiction. I will instance in two other promises of the like nature and importance. The first is, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. God there promises to reclaim them from their idolatry, by convincing them of their sin, and giving them repentance, and his Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify them; "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Now that which I would argue from hence is this: Those idolatrous Jews to whom God promises that he will cleanse them, and give them a new heart, and a new spirit, and put his Spirit into them, were as yet unregenerate, and consequently, as the objection supposeth, could not pray for these blessings, nor ask them of God in a right manner; and yet he suspends these blessings upon the condition of their praying for them, as is evident, (ver. 37. "Thus

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saith the Lord God, I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." From whence it is plain, that God would not bestow these blessings upon them, without their seeking to him for them. Now if these persons, because they were unregenerate, could not pray for these things, then these promises signified nothing; which is by no means to be imagined of the promises of God. So that it is clear, that the Spirit of God is here promised to the unregenerate, upon condition of their suing to God for it; and if so, there can be no reason to restrain the promise in the text, which is of the same nature, and made upon the same condition, to the regenerate only.

The other text I shall mention, is James i. 5. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him." In these words St. James, under the notion of wisdom, (as I told you before) doth comprehend all the fruits of the Spirit, which are the effect of regeneration and sanctification. Now this promise being conceived in so general terms, cannot without manifest force and violence be restrained only to the regenerate; for then the promise should not have run thus; "If any man lack wisdom;" but, "If any man have this spiritual wisdom already, let him ask more of God." You see then what reason there is, why this promise of God's Holy Spirit should be understood in the latitude wherein it is expressed, and not restrained to the regenerate only.

Thirdly, If, by having the Spirit of God, be understood the general and common influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, whereby they are quickened and excited to their duty; I grant that

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no man that hath not the Spirit of God in this sense can pray to God, or acceptably perform any other duty of religion: and this assertion is very agreeable to the phrase and language of the Holy Scriptures, which attribute all good motions and actions to the Spirit of God working in us, and assisting us; and in this sense unregenerate men are under the influence of God's Spirit, or else they could not be said to resist it; but they have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them, which is the most proper sense of having the Spirit of God; in which sense the apostle says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" but then it is specially to be noted, that the common and transient operation of God's Spirit, which is preparatory to conversion and regeneration, and whereby God works in men a sense of sin, and some inclination and disposition to goodness, is by our Saviour peculiarly attributed to the Father, as his proper work; in which sense our Saviour says, (John vi. 44.) "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." (Verse 45.) "Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Now men are said to learn of the Father, and to be drawn by him, by those preparatory dispositions for the receiving of the Christian religion, which were wrought in men by that natural sense of good and evil, which they have by the law of nature, which is properly the dispensation of the Father, as being the immediate effect of God's creation, as a late judicious writer hath very well observed, and more largely explained.

Fourthly, But if, by having the Spirit of God, be meant the special effect of regeneration and sancti-

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fication, and the permanent influence and constant residence of God's Holy Spirit in good men, then I make no doubt to say, that those who have not the Spirit of God in this sense, may ask his Spirit of him; that is, those who are not yet regenerate and sanctified, may in an acceptable manner pray to God to give them his Holy Spirit, to the purposes of sanctification and perseverance in goodness; and they may ask this of God sincerely, earnestly, and in faith, which are the qualifications of an acceptable prayer. And this I think may be evidently made appear, both from Scripture, and by good consequence from the concessions of all sorts of divines.

I. From Scripture. It is plain that wicked and unregenerate men are commanded and required to pray to this purpose. Not to mention the general commands concerning prayer, which do certainly oblige unregenerate men, I will produce one plain and undeniable instance, (Acts viii. 22, 23.) where St. Peter directs Simon Magus, whom he expressly declares to be in an unregenerate state, to pray to God for the pardon of his great sin, which certainly he would not have done, had he thought an unregenerate man could not pray in an acceptable manner: because his counsel would have been to no purpose: but it is plain that St. Peter was so far from thinking that an unregenerate man could not pray acceptably to God, that he gives this as a reason why he should pray—because he was unregenerate: "Pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee: for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

II. This will appear farther by clear consequence, from the concessions of all sorts of divines, and principles granted on all hands.

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1. It is universally granted, that it is a thing very pleasing and acceptable to God, that men should pray to be regenerate and sanctified; so that the matter of this prayer is unquestionably acceptable.

2. It is likewise granted on all hands, that before a man is regenerate and sanctified, he must be made sensible of his evil and sinful state, and of his great need of God's grace and Spirit, and that God's Spirit is able to work this change in him, and that it is the will of God that he should be regenerated and sanctified.

3. It is likewise generally granted, that these preparatory works of regeneration, these beginnings of our repentance and returning to God, and all desires and endeavours to that purpose, are acceptable to God.

Now from these concessions it plainly follows, that an unregenerate man may pray to God acceptably for his Holy Spirit, to regenerate and sanctify him. For,

1. The matter of his prayer is very acceptable to God, according to the first concession.

2. The manner of it may be acceptable, because an unregenerate man may pray for this sincerely, with earnestness, and in faith: sincerely, because he may put up this prayer to God out of a true sense of his miserable and sinful state, and his great need of God's grace and Holy Spirit; and he that is truly sensible of this, cannot dissemble with God, he cannot but be very real and sincere in this request: and this sense of his condition, and the need of what he asks, will make him earnest and importunate: and he may pray in faith, that is, not doubting but that God is able and willing to grant him what he asks, because he may be convinced that

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the Spirit is able to work this change in him, and that this is the will of God, that he should be regenerated and sanctified, according to the second concession.

3. There is no reason to think that God will not accept such a prayer as this; because these preparative works of regeneration, viz. a sense of our sinful state, and of our need of God's grace and Spirit, and earnest desires and prayers for these, are acceptable to God, according to the third concession. So that now I hope that this objection, which hath been so troublesome to many, is fully satisfied.

As for those texts where it is said, that "the prayers and the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord," I shall briefly return this answer: That these texts are not to be understood of a wicked and unregenerate man, simply as such, but as resolved to continue such. And thus Solomon elsewhere in the Proverbs explains what he means by a wicked man, (Prov. xxviii. 9.) "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." So that the wicked man, whose prayer is an abomination, is such an one as is obstinately and resolvedly disobedient, such an one as "turneth away his ear from hearing the law." And David, much to the same purpose, (Psal. l. 15—17.) "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Such wicked men as will not be reclaimed, what have they to do to pray, or perform any other act of religion? nothing that they do,

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whilst such, can be acceptable to God. And to the same sense David says elsewhere, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." God will reject the prayers of the best men, if they retain a secret love to any sin.

If it be yet farther objected, that unregenerate men are out of Christ, in and through whom we are accepted: to this I answer, that those only who are in Christ, are in a state of perfect acceptance with God: but the beginnings of this state, and all tendency towards it, such as is hearty and earnest prayer to God for his Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify us, have their degrees of acceptance from their relation to the perfect state whereof they are the beginnings, and toward which they tend: for by the same reason that a regenerate state is acceptable to God, all the beginnings of it, and preparations to it, are proportionably acceptable; the degrees of acceptance being proportionable to the difference which is between the beginning of a thing, and the perfection of it.

Having thus endeavoured to clear this truth, I come, in the

Fifth and last place, To make some brief application of it to ourselves.

1. This is a matter of great encouragement to us, under the sense of our own weakness and impotency. When we consider the corruption of our nature, the strength of our lust, and the malice and power of the devil, and compare our weakness with the strength of those mighty enemies of our souls, we are apt to despond in our minds, and our hearts are ready to fail within us; like the people of Israel, when they heard the report of the spies, concerning the strength of the land which they were to conquer,

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and the terror of the inhabitants, they wish themselves almost dead, for fear of death; "Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt; or would to God we had died in the wilderness. Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" (Numb. xiv. 2, &c.) Thus we are apt to be disheartened when we look only to ourselves, and consider the power of our enemies; but when we look beyond ourselves, as Caleb and Joshua did, to that presence and strength of God which were promised to go along with them; if we would but consider those gracious and powerful assistances of God's Holy Spirit, which are offered to us, and are ready to join with us in this holy warfare of fighting against sin, and subduing and mortifying our lusts, we should then encourage ourselves as they did. "Fear ye not the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, the Lord is with us; fear them not." (Numb. xiv. 9.) If we would but apply ourselves to God for the aids of his grace and Holy Spirit, and make use of that assistance which he offers, we should, as the apostle speaks in another case, (Heb. xi. 34.) "out of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in fight, and be able to put to flight the armies of aliens." If we would but wisely consider our own strength, how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight! all our spiritual enemies would quail before us, and, as it is said of the Canaanites, (Josh. v. 1.) "their hearts would melt, and there would be no more spirit left in them." (2 Kings vi. 15.) When Elisha's servant saw a host compassing the city of Samaria with horses and chariots, he was in great fear and perplexity, and said,

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"Master, what shall we do?" but when, upon Elisha's prayer, "the Lord had opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha:" then he took heart, and his fears vanished, "because those that were with them were more than they that were against them." Thus, if our eyes were opened by faith to discern those invisible aids and assistances which stand by us, how should this raise our courage and our confidence, and make us to triumph with the apostle, (Rom. viii. 31.) "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and to rebuke our fears, and the despondency of our spirits, as David does, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? trust still in God:" and to say with him, when "multitudes of enemies compass us about, in the name of the Lord we will destroy them." (Eph. vi. 10.) When the apostle represents to the Christians what enemies they had to contest withal, we fight not only against flesh and blood; that is, not only against men who persecute us; but against devils, who continually infest and tempt us, against principalities and powers, &c. he encourageth them against all these, by the strength of God; "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Thus we should encourage ourselves in God, and animate our resolutions from the consideration of God's Holy Spirit, that Spirit of might and of power, which God is ready to give to every one of us, to assist us to do whatever he requires of us. And we have no reason to complain of weakness, so long as the strength of God stands by us, and the powerful aids of God's Spirit are ready to join themselves to us.

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2. Let us earnestly beg of God his Holy Spirit, seeing it is so necessary to us, and God is so ready to bestow this best of gifts upon us. Bread is not more necessary to the support of our natural life, than the Holy Spirit of God is to our spiritual life and strength: and there is no father upon earth more ready to give bread to his children that cry after him, than God is to give his Holy Spirit to those who heartily and earnestly beg it of him. Did we but know how great a gift the Spirit of God is, and how necessary to us, we would not lose such a blessing for want of asking: but we would be importunate with God, and give him no rest; ask, and seek, and knock, and address ourselves to him with all earnestness, and never give over till our desires were granted.

3. Let us take heed of "grieving the Spirit of God," and provoking him to withdraw himself from us. As God is very ready to give his Spirit to us, so we should give the best entertainment we can to so great a guest, lest we give him cause to take away his Holy Spirit from us. And there are two things chiefly which provoke God hereto:

(1.) If we resist and quench the motions of his Spirit, and be incompliant to the dictates and suggestions of it. We affront the Spirit of God which is given us for our guidance and direction, when we will not be ruled, and governed, and led by it; we thrust the Spirit of God out of his office, and make his presence useless and unnecessary to us; and this causeth him to go away grieved from us.

(2.) If we harbour and entertain any thing that is of a contrary quality and nature to him, and inconsistent with him; and of such a nature is every lust and corruption that is cherished in our souls.

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The Spirit of God is the best friend in the world: but as friends have the most tender resentments of unkind usage, so the Spirit of God is of a most tender and delicate sense, and cannot bear unkindness, especially such an unkindness as to take in to him the greatest enemy he hath in the world: for there is no such strong antipathy in nature, as there is between sin and the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God cannot endure to dwell in an impure soul. If we would have the Spirit of God abide with us, we must give no entertainment to any lust, we must banish the love of all sin for ever out of our hearts: for if we harbour any lust in our bosom, it will be to us as Dalilah was to Sampson, it will insensibly bereave us of our strength: the Spirit of God will depart from us, and we shall be like other men.

4. And lastly, God's readiness to afford the grace and assistance of his Holy Spirit to us, to enable us to the performance of our duty, and the obedience of his laws, makes all wilful sin and disobedience inexcusable. Let us not pretend any longer the impossibility, or insuperable difficulty of our duty, when so powerful an assistance is offered to us. If any man come short of happiness, for want of performing the conditions of the gospel, it is by his own wilful fault and negligence; because he would not beg God's grace, and because he would not make use of it. If any man be wicked, and continue in a sinful course, it is not for want of power, but of will, to do better. God is always beforehand with us in the offers of his grace and assistance, and is wanting to no man in that which is necessary to make him good and happy. No man shall be able to plead at the day of judgment want of power to

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have done his duty: for "God will judge the world in righteousness;" and then I am sure he will condemn no man for not having done that which was impossible for him to do. God hath done enough to every man to leave him without excuse. St. Paul tells us, that the blind heathens should have no apology to make for themselves. Next to the being of God, and his goodness and justice, I do as verily believe it, as I do any thing in the world, that no man shall be able to say to God at the great day, "Lord, I would have repented of my sins, and obeyed thy laws, but I wanted power to do it; I was left destitute of the grace which was necessary to the performance and discharge of my duty; I did earnestly beg thy Holy Spirit, but thou didst deny me." No man shall have the face to say this to God at the great day; every man's conscience will then acquit God, and lay all the fault upon his own folly and neglect; for then "every mouth shall be stopped, and God shall be justified in his saying, and overcome when we are judged."

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SERMON CCLIII.

THE BAD AND GOOD USE OF GOD'S SIGNAL JUDGMENTS UPON OTHERS.

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—LUKE xiii. 5.

THE occasion of these words you have at the beginning of the chapter; "There were present, at that season (says the evangelist), some that told our Saviour of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." These, in all probability, were some of the faction of Judas Gaulonita, who about that time, as Josephus tells us, had stirred up the Galileans to a sedition against the Roman government, under a pretence of asserting their liberty, by freeing themselves from the Roman tribute; and some of these, coming to Jerusalem to sacrifice, (as the custom of the Jews was, especially at the time of the passover,) Pilate caused them to be slain upon the place, while they were at this service, shedding their blood with that of the beasts which were killed for sacrifice. The report of this profane cruelty being brought to our Saviour, he (as his custom was in all his conversations, to raise some useful meditation from such occurrences that happened, and to turn them to a spiritual advantage) takes occasion, from the relation of this sad accident, to correct a very vicious humour, which hath always reigned in the world, of censuring the faults of others, whilst we overlook our own.

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The principle of self-love which was planted in innocent nature, is by the fall and corruption of man degenerated into self-flattery; so that it is now almost become natural to men, to supply the want of a good conscience, by a good conceit of themselves. Hence it comes to pass, that men are so ready to take all advantages to confirm themselves in that false peace which they have created to themselves in their own imaginations; and so they can but maintain a comfortable opinion of themselves, they matter not how uncharitable they are to others; and knowing no better way to countenance this fond conceit of themselves, than by fancying God to be their friend; hence it comes to pass, that they are so apt to interpret the several providences of God towards others in favour of themselves; and to abuse the judgments of God, which fall upon their neighbours, into an argument of their own comparative innocency.

And therefore our Saviour, (who "knew what was in man," and what kind of conclusions men are apt to draw from such occurrences of Providence as this which was now presented) endeavours in the first place to prevent the bad use they were likely to make of it: "Suppose ye (says he) that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay," &c. To this instance of the Galileans, he adds another of the same kind, well known to all that dwelt in Jerusalem: and that was, of the eighteen persons who were slain by the fall of a tower, which was in the Pool of Siloam, at the foot of Mount Sion (verse the 4th): "Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay."

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And having thus anticipated their censuring of others, our Saviour proceeds to awaken them to a consideration and care of themselves: "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The general sense of which words is, that impenitency in sin will certainly be the ruin of men sooner or later: it will probably bring great mischiefs and calamities upon men in this world; however, it will infallibly plunge them into misery in the next. But besides the certain denunciation of misery and ruin to all impenitent sinners, which is the largest sense of the words, and agreeable to many other express texts of Scripture, it is probable enough, that they may more immediately and particularly refer to those temporal calamities which were to befal the Jews, and bespoken by our Saviour by way of prediction, foretelling what would be the fate of the whole Jewish nation, if they continued impenitent, πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολεῖσθε, "Ye shall all perish in like manner;" that is, if ye do not repent, besides the vengeance of another world, a temporal judgment as sad as these I have instanced in, and not much unlike them, shall come upon this whole nation: and so indeed it came to pass afterwards. For Josephus tells us, that at the time of the passover, when the whole nation of the Jews were met together, as their custom was at Jerusalem, they were all shut up and besieged by the Romans: and he tells us farther, that in the time of that siege, upon a sedition among themselves, a great multitude of them were slain in the temple, as they were sacrificing, and their blood poured forth, together with that of the beasts which were to be offered, as had happened before to the Galileans.

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From the words thus explained, I shall observe these two things:

First, The wrong use which men are apt to make of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God upon others. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?" intimating, that men are very apt so to conclude, and that the Jews did so.

Secondly, The right use that we should make of these things, which is, to reflect upon our own sins, and repent of them, lest the like or greater judgments overtake us. "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

First, The wrong use which men are apt to make of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God upon others; and that is, to be uncharitable and censorious towards others, which is commonly consequent upon a gross and stupid neglect of ourselves. For men do not usually entertain and cherish this censorious humour for its own sake, but in order to some farther end; they are not so uncharitable merely out of spite and malice to others, but out of self-flattery and a fond affection to themselves. This makes them forward to represent others to all the disadvantage that may be, and to render them as bad as they can, that they themselves may appear less evil in their own eyes, and may have a colour to set off themselves by the comparison. It is the nature of guilt to flee from itself, and to use all possible art to hide and lessen it. For guilt in the soul is like deformity in the body. Persons very deformed seldom arrive to that absurd conceit of themselves, as to think themselves beauties; but because they cannot think so, they do all they can to comfort and commend themselves by comparison. Hence men

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are apt to censure and aggravate the faults and miscarriages of their neighbours, that their own may appear the less; for a lesser evil in respect of a greater, hath some face and appearance of good; and therefore men are ready to take all advantages to represent others as bad as may be; and because there can be no greater evidence, that a man is a great sinner, than if he be declared to be so from heaven; hence it is, that men are so forward to interpret the remarkable judgments of God upon any person, as an argument of his being a more notorious offender than others.

For the farther explication and illustration of this point, I shall do these three things:

I. I shall shew that men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others.

II. I shall more particularly consider several of the rash conclusions which men are apt to draw from the judgments of God upon others: whether upon public societies and communities of men, or upon particular persons.

III. I shall shew how unreasonable it is to draw from hence any such rash and uncharitable conclusions concerning others, and likewise how foolish it is from hence to draw comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

I. That men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others. This our Saviour plainly intimates in the text, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem?" By which manner of speaking, our

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Saviour signifies, that men are very apt thus to suppose, that those upon whom the extraordinary judgments of God fall, are no ordinary sinners, but are guilty of somewhat above the common rate of men.

Thus we find Job's friends, when they saw him afflicted by the hand of God, in so strange and extraordinary a manner, from hence presently concluded, he must needs be a prodigious sinner; and because they could find no evidence of this in his life and actions, therefore they concluded that his wickedness was secret, and that it lay there where they could not see it, in his heart and thoughts: for this they laid down for a certain conclusion, that being so remarkable a sufferer, he must needs be a great sinner; and because they could discern no such thing in his outward conversation, they charged him with hypocrisy, and concluded all his external profession of piety and religion to be false and counterfeit.

So, likewise, when the man that was born blind was brought to our Saviour, (John ix. 2.) the disciples presently asked him, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" This was that which lay uppermost in their minds, the very first thing that suggested itself to their thoughts: surely this judgment was inflicted upon this man for some particular and extraordinary sin, which either he, or (because this was not so likely) his parents had been guilty of.

And we find in common experience, how prone men are to make uncharitable constructions of the judgments of God upon others, and grievously to censure those whom God hath smitten; partly because it looks like a vindication of themselves from the guilt of the like crimes, since they are not in-

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volved in the like sufferings; partly to gratify their pride and curiosity, in seeming to understand the reason and end of God's judgments, as if they had been of his council, and saw farther into the reasons of his providence than other men; like some pragmatical people in civil matters, who, though they think no more than their neighbours, yet will needs seem to understand those hidden and secret springs which move public affairs; and, which is yet worse, many times to gratify their own passions and foolish conceits, that God is angry with those things and persons which displease them, and that God's judgments are expressions of his particular dislike of those whom they disaffect, and would certainly punish, if the government of the world were in their hands: or, lastly, men think it a piece of piety, and affectionate zeal for God, and a taking of his part, to censure those heavily, whom God afflicts severely; like some foolish parasites, who, if they see a great man be angry with any one and strike him, they think themselves bound to fall upon him, and, out of an officious flattery, will beat him too. But from whatever cause it proceeds, it is certainly a very bad thing, and our Saviour here in the text does with great vehemency deny, that any such conclusion can certainly be collected from the judgments of God upon others; "I tell you, Nay." And to express this more vehemently, he repeats it again, "I tell you, Nay." Let us, therefore,

II. More particularly consider some of the rash conclusions which men are apt to draw from the judgments of God upon others, whether upon public societies and communities of men, or upon particular persons.

1. It is rash, where there is no Divine revelation

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in the case, to be peremptory as to the particular sin or kind of it; so as to say, that for such a sin God sent such a judgment upon a particular person, or upon a company of men, unless the judgment be a natural effect and consequent of such a sin; as, if a drunken man die of a surfeit, or a lewd person of a disease that is the proper effect of such a vice, or if the punishment ordained by law for such a crime overtake the offender; in these and such-like cases, it is neither rash nor uncharitable to say, such a mischief befel a man for such a fault; because such an evil is evidently the effect of such a sin: but in other cases, peremptorily to conclude is great rashness.

Thus the heathens of old laid all those fearful judgments of God, which fell upon the Roman empire in the first ages of Christianity, upon the Christians, as if they had been sent by God on purpose to testify his displeasure against that new sect of religion. And thus every party deals with those that are opposite to them, out of a fond persuasion that God is like themselves, and that he cannot but hate those whom they hate, and punish those whom they would punish, if the sway and government of things were permitted to them.

Thus the papists, on the one hand, attribute all the judgments of God upon this nation, the confusion and distractions of so many years, and those later judgments wherewith God hath visited us in so dreadful a manner, to our schism and heresy, as the proper cause of them (for so they call our Reformation of ourselves from their errors and corruptions): but to what cause, then, will they ascribe the great felicity of Queen Elizabeth's long reign, and the peace of King James's reign? And then,

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on the other hand, some of the dissenters from our church are wont to ascribe these calamities to a quite different cause—that our Reformation hath not gone far enough from the church of Rome. It is hard to say, which of these conclusions is most rash and unreasonable; I wish other reasons of these calamities were not too visible and notorious; the horrible impiety and wickedness which abound and reign amongst us.

2. It is rash, likewise, for any man, without revelation, to conclude peremptorily, that God must needs in his judgments only have respect to some late and fresh sins, which were newly committed; and that all his arrows are only levelled against those impieties of men which are now upon the stage, and in present view. This is rash and groundless; and men herein take a measure of God by themselves, and because they are mightily affected with the present, and sensible of a fresh provocation, and want to revenge themselves while the heat is upon them, therefore they think God must do so too. But there is nothing occasions more mistakes in the world about God and his providence, than to bring him to our standard, and to measure his thoughts by our thoughts, and the ways and methods of his providence by our ways. Justice in God is a wise, and calm, and steady principle, which, as to the time and circumstances of its exercise, is regulated by his wisdom. Past and present are very material differences to us, but they signify little to God, whose vast and comprehensive understanding takes in all differences of time, and looks upon them at one view; so that when the judgments of God follow the sins of men at a great distance, "God is not slack, as men count slack-

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ness: for a thousand years are in his sight but as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" as the apostle reasons about this very case I am now speaking of. (2 Pet. iii. 8.)

And to convince men of their error and mistake in this particular, the Scripture hath given us many instances to the contrary, that the justice of God hath many times a great retrospection, and punisheth the sins of men a long time after the commission of them. This he threatens in the second commandment; "To visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate him." Thus we find he dealt with Ahab; "He did not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days he brought it upon his house," (1 Kings xxi. 29.) So, likewise, we find (2 Sam. xxi.) God brought three years of famine upon Israel, in the days of David, for a national sin committed in Saul's reign: namely, for the cruelty exercised upon the Gibeonites, contrary to the public faith of the nation given to them. So, likewise, the extirpation of the Amorites, and the other inhabitants of Canaan, was not a judgment inflicted by God upon them, only for the sins of that present age, but for the iniquity which had been many ages in filling up; as may plainly be collected from the expression, (Gen. xv. 16.) "The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full," which was spoken four or five generations before they were rooted out. And so, also, our Saviour tells us, that "the blood of all the prophets and righteous men which had been shed in all ages, should come upon that generation."

Nay, if this were not so, how should God judge the world? And if it be consistent with the justice of God to respite the greatest part of the punish-

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ment of sinners to another world, then certainly he may, without any imputation of injustice, defer the punishment of sin in this world.

3. It is rash to conclude from little circumstances of judgments, or some fanciful parallel betwixt the sin and the punishment, what sinners, and what persons in particular, God designed to punish by such a calamity. There is scarce any thing betrays men more to rash and ungrounded censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God, than a superstitious observation of some little circumstances belonging to them, and a conceit of a seeming parallel between such a sin, and such a judgment.

This was the ground of Shimei's rash determination concerning David, and what particular sin of his it was, for which God permitted his son Absalom to rise up in rebellion against him: (2 Sam. xvi. 8.) "The Lord hath returned upon thee (says he) all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy own mischief." Here seemed to be as handsome a parallel between this misfortune which befel David, and his carriage towards the house of Saul, as can easily happen in any judgment. David had carried away the kingdom from the family of Saul, his father-in-law; and now, by the providence of God, David's own son, Absalom, seems to be stirred up to supplant his father, and to ravish the kingdom out of his hands: the suitableness of the judgment to the supposed sin of David, would tempt any man that had the curiosity to pry into the judgments of God, and a fancy apt to be pleased with parallels, to have

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looked upon this censure of Shimei as not without ground: for though David was in no fault as to Saul's house, though in truth and reality he had the best title to the kingdom that could be, it being disposed to him by God's appointment; yet, because Samuel's anointing him to be king was a thing privately done, and so might not either be publicly known, or not publicly believed, there seems to be a very fair colour and pretence for this censure of Shimei.

And, therefore, methinks the consideration of this one instance should very much deter wise men from peremptory conclusions concerning the judgments of God, upon such slight grounds as a supposed parallel between the sin and the punishment, and yet we find all sorts of men very superstitiously affected this way: all parties are very greedy to catch at any shadow of a parellel between the judgments which befal their enemies, and the sins which they suppose them to be guilty of, and are apt to cry up such things as evident testimonies from heaven of God's displeasure against those whom they have a mind to make odious.

In the beginning of the Reformation, when Zuinglius was slain in a battle by the papists, and his body burnt, his heart was found entire in the ashes; from whence (saith the historian) his enemies concluded the obdurateness of his heart; but his friends, the firmness and sincerity of it in the true religion. Both these censures seem to be built upon the same ground of fancy and imagination: but it is a wise and well-grounded observation, which Thuanus, the historian, (who was himself of the Roman communion) makes upon it — *Adeo turbatis odio aut amore animis, ut sit in religionis*

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dissensionibus, pro se quisque omnia superstitiose interpretatur: "Thus (says he) men's minds being prejudiced beforehand by love or hatred (as it commonly falls out in differences of religion), each party superstitiously interprets the little circumstances of every event in favour of itself." Every thing hath two handles; and a good wit and a strong imagination may find something in every judgment, whereby he may, with some appearance of reason, turn the cause of the judgment upon his adversary. Fancy is an endless thing; and if we will go this way to work, then he that hath the best wit is like to be the best interpreter of God's judgments.

I do not deny (as I touched before), but where the sin is evident, and the punishment is the genuine product and natural effect of the sin, we may, without uncharitableness, ascribe the punishment to the sin, as the particular cause of it; as sickness to intemperance, and poverty to sloth and prodigality: or if a judgment be remarkably inflicted upon a person, in the very act of some notorious sin; or if when a person hath been guilty of a sin, which is unquestionably so, and out of all controversy, if afterwards a judgment befal that person, which carries the very signature of the sin upon it; as, when the dogs licked Ahab's blood, in the very same place where he had shed the blood of Naboth; in these and the like cases, a man may, without rashness and uncharitableness, fix the cause of such a judgment upon such a sin; but then, as I said before, the sin must be very evident and out of dispute, and the punishment must carry so plain a mark and signature upon it, as, without straining, and the help of fancy, is obvious to every one's observation.

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And yet even in these cases, the party himself upon whom the judgment falls may better make the interpretation than a by-stander; and therefore the Scripture, as it is in all other things very instructive, so particularly in this matter it observes this decorum, not to bring in others making interpretations of the judgments of God, but the persons themselves upon whom the judgments fall. Thus Adonibezek, (Judges i. 6, 7.) when the men of Judah had taken him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, the Scriptures do not bring in others making a censure and interpretation of this judgment of God upon him; but bring him in making this reflection upon himself—"Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me." So, likewise, Jacob's sons, when they were brought into trouble in Egypt, about their brother Benjamin, they presently reflect upon their sin against their brother Joseph: (Gen. xlii. 21, 22.) "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. Therefore, behold, also his blood is required." They took notice of the resemblance betwixt the sin and the punishment; they had sinned concerning their brother, and they were punished in a brother.

4. It is rash, likewise, to determine any thing concerning the end and consequence of God's judgments. Commonly all parties that are down are apt to sooth and flatter themselves, that God intends, by such and such judgments upon their adversaries, to make way for the restoration of their

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own sect, and the restitution of those things which they desire. Others, who are more melancholy and concerned, are apt to look upon the worst side of things, and to imagine dreadful and dismal consequences. But it is a fond thing for us to pretend to know the secret ends and designs of the Divine Providence: for sometimes God makes one calamity the forerunner of another; and sometimes, again, his omnipotent wisdom forceth good out of evil, and makes a great judgment in the issue to turn to a mighty blessing.

Jacob thought the loss of his son Joseph one of the greatest calamities that could have befallen him, when it was the greatest mercy to his family that could be: for in truth the providence of God sent him as a harbinger into Egypt to provide for his father and his family.

It is observed by the wise author of the History of the Council of Trent, that when Zuinglius and Œcolampadius, the two chief protestant ministers among the Swisses, died within a few days of one another, the papists interpreted this to signify God's design to restore their former religion to them, in that he had taken away at once the two great pillars and supports of the protestant cause; upon which the author makes this wise observation: "Certainly (says he), it is a pious thought to attribute the disposal of all events to the providence of God: but to determine to what end these events are directed by that high wisdom, is not far from presumption. Men are so religiously wedded to their own opinions, that they are persuaded, that God loves and favours them, as much as they themselves do. But (says he), the things which happened afterwards did confute this presumption; for the protestant

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doctrine made a much speedier progress after their death than it had done before." We think that a cause must needs sink, when some great supports of it are taken away: but God stands in need of no man; he can raise up new instruments, or carry on his own designs by the weakest and most unlikely means.

5. And lastly, It is rashness to determine that those persons, or that part of the community upon which the judgments of God do particularly fall, are greater sinners than the rest, who are untouched by it. And this is the very case our Saviour instanceth here in the text: "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay. Or these eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay." And this brings me to the

III. Third particular I proposed, which was to shew, how unreasonable it is for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions from the judgments of God upon others, that they are greater sinners than others; and likewise, how foolish it is from hence to take any comfort and encouragement to ourselves, that because we escape those calamities which have befallen others, therefore we are better than they. Our Saviour vehemently denies that either of these conclusions can justly be made from the remarkable judgments of God, which befal others, and pass by us; "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

I. It is very unreasonable for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions concerning others, that because the judgments of God fall upon them,

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that therefore they are greater sinners than others. For,

1. What do we know, but that God may inflict those evils upon those particular persons for secret ends and reasons, only known to his own infinite wisdom, and fit to be concealed from us? What do we know but he may afflict such a person in a remarkable manner, purely in the use of his sovereignty, without any special respect to the sins of such a person, as being greater than the sins of other men; but yet for some great end, very worthy of his wisdom and goodness? As for the trial of such a man's faith, and of his exemplary patience and submission to the will of God, it pleaseth God to set him up for a mark, and to suffer many and sharp arrows to be shot at him, to try whether his faith and patience be proof; as men set up armour, and shoot at it with a double charge, not with a design to hurt it, but to prove and praise it.

We are assured that the goodness of God is such, that had it not been for sin, we had never known affliction, nor been exercised with it; but now, that we have all sinned, and upon a common account are all liable to the justice of God, he may single out from this common herd of sinners whom he pleaseth to smite with his judgments, and for what end he pleaseth: and therefore, when God at any time lets fly an arrow at a particular person, this only signifies at the utmost that he is a sinner in general, but no man can from hence with any certainty conclude, that this man is a greater sinner than other men.

And this is very plain from those instances I have had occasion before to mention; the instance of Job, whom God afflicted in a most terrible manner, for

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the trial of his faith and patience, and to furnish all ages with a standing and glorious example of so great and necessary a virtue: and from the instance of the man in the gospel that was born blind, concerning whom our Saviour expressly declares, that this judgment did not befal this man for any particular or remarkable sin, which either this man or his parents had been guilty of above others, but that the glorious power of God might be manifested in his miraculous cure: (John ix. 3.) "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

2. What do we know but that God may send these calamities upon some particular persons, in mercy to the generality; and upon some particular places in a nation, out of kindness to the whole? When wickedness has overspread a nation, and is grown universal, if, out of this herd of sinners, the justice of God please to single out some few persons, and to chase them and hunt them down for terror to the rest, that others "may hear, and fear, and take warning;" this doth not signify that the persons selected for ruin were in a different condition from the rest, or that others had not deserved the like judgments as well as they; it only signifies, that "God remembers mercy in the midst of judgment," and that he was not willing to destroy them all; that "he does not delight in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness and live." He punisheth a few for example, that others taking warning by it, he may have the opportunity and occasion to spare a great many.

Not but that the hand of God doth sometimes as it were by a finger point at the sin, which it designs

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to punish: as, when remarkable punishments follow visibly upon notorious sins; when the sinner is punished, *flagrante crimine*, in the very act and heat of his sin; when some great and clamorous impiety calls down some more immediate and sudden judgment from heaven; when a sin is punished in its own kind, with a judgment so plainly suited to it, and so pat, that the punishment carries the very mark and signature of the sin upon it; as in the case of Adonibezek, who was forced to acknowledge, that as he had done, so God had requited him; and as in the known story of Bajazet, who, having been a cruel and barbarous tyrant, was punished in his own kind, by falling into the hands of Tamerlane, who used him with the same insolence and cruelty which he had exercised towards others.

In such cases as these, men may without uncharitableness conclude, that such a judgment of God was sent upon a particular errand to chastise and punish such a sin: but then in such cases as these, we do not from the judgments inflicted conclude a person guilty of some great sin which we do not know before; but by comparing the sin, which we knew him to be guilty of, with the judgment which was inflicted, we do reasonably collect, that such a judgment was probably sent for such a sin; but generally speaking, no man can with certainty conclude, from the greatness of the judgment that falls upon any one, that such a man was a more grievous sinner than others, who have escaped the same or the like judgments.

II. It is foolish likewise to take any comfort and encouragement to ourselves, that, because we have escaped those sore judgments which have befallen others, therefore we are better than they are; for (as

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I have shewn) these judgments do not necessarily import, that those upon whom they fall are greater sinners, and that those who escape them are not so: but suppose it true, that they were greater sinners than we are, for any man from hence to take encouragement to himself to continue in sin, is as if, from the severe punishment which is inflicted upon a traitor, a man should encourage himself in felony; both these sorts of criminals are by the law in danger of death, only the circumstances of death are in one case more severe and terrible than in the other; but he that from hence encourageth himself in felony, reasons very ill, because he argues against his own life. The only prudent inference that can be made, is, not to come within the danger of the law, which punisheth all crimes, though not with equal severity.

Thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to speak to from these words, viz. The wrong use which too many are apt to make of the signal and extraordinary judgments of God upon others. I proceed to the

Second thing I observed in the text, viz. The right use we should make of the judgments of God upon others; and that is, to reflect upon our own sins, and to repent of them, lest a like or greater judgment overtake us. This our Saviour tells us in the next words, "But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." As if he had said, There is no reason at all, why ye should conclude from those terrible judgments of God, which have befallen those miserable persons, that they were greater sinners than yourselves, who have for the present escaped those judgments; but, instead of censuring others, you should look into yourselves: the most proper reflection to be made upon such occasions, is, that

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you are liable to the like judgments, your sins have deserved that God's providence should have dealt so with you, as it hath done with those Galileans, "whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices;" or with those eighteen persons upon whom the tower of Siloam fell; and for what reasons soever these judgments of God fell upon them, and passed by you, (which you are not at all concerned to inquire into) to be sure, if you continue impenitent, you have reason to expect the like or greater ruin.

When we see the judgments of God abroad in the world, and to fall heavily upon particular places and persons, we should argue thus with ourselves: For what reason the holy and wise providence of God hath dealt so severely with others, I know not; whether out of a particular displeasure against them, for some notorious sin committed by them; or whether for a merciful warning to me and others; or for both: it is not for me to pry curiously into the counsels of God, and to wade into the depth of his judgments; but there is one use which I am sure it concerns me nearly to make of it, to look into myself, to search and try my ways, to repent of my sins, and to forsake them, lest, while I am gazing upon others, I fall into the like or greater calamities. It may be, those persons and places which have been so severely visited with the judgments of God, were no more obnoxious to him than I am; and, when this hath been done to others, in all appearance not guilty of greater sins than I am, what may I not fear, who am in the same condemnation? It may be, they were not so great sinners as I am; this should awaken me so much the more to a consideration of my own danger: nay, possibly many of those whom the rod of God hath smitten, were his own dear

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children. This should startle men most of all: for if this have been done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? If this have been the lot of those whom God loves, what shall be the portion of those whom he hates? If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

The judgments of God, which are executed upon particular places and persons, are designed by him to be so many admonitions to the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness. That fearful ruin which befel Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, was not only intended for the punishment of the inhabitants of those wicked cities; but for a standing example, and a lasting terror, to all ages of the world. So St. Jude tells us, (ver. 7.) that "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

It is the advice of the prophet Micah, (vi. 9.) "Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it." Every rod of God, every affliction hath a voice, which doth not only speak to the sufferers, but to the spectators also; not only to those who are smitten, but to those who stand by and look on: and if, when God sends judgments upon others, we do not take warning and example by them: if, instead of reflecting upon ourselves, and trying our own ways, we fall a censuring of others: if we will pervert the meaning of God's providences, and will not understand the design and intention of them; then we leave God no other way to awaken us, and to bring us to a consideration of our evil ways, but by pouring down his wrath upon our heads, that so he may convince us to be sinners by the same argument, from whence

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we have concluded others to be so: or if we continue impenitent, he may ruin us as incorrigible.

And thus I have done with the second observation I propounded, viz. The right use we ought to make of the judgments of God upon others, which is, to reflect upon ourselves, and to repent of our evil ways, lest the like or greater judgments overtake us. I shall only draw an inference or two from what I have already discoursed upon these two heads.

1. Let us adore the judgments of God, and instead of searching into the particular reasons and ends of them, let us say with St. Paul, (Rom. xi. 33.) "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" If he, who was taken up into the third heaven, and had such multitudes of revelations, and was admitted so much nearer to the secrets of God than we are, durst not search into them, how much less should we, who only converse here below?

Let us not then trouble ourselves with nice inquiries into these things; nor one another with mutual censures and uncharitable reflections upon one another: but let us all agree in this, to acknowledge the righteousness of God in all his providences to us and others, "to humble ourselves under his mighty hand," ἀσπάζεσθαι τὰ συμβαίνοντα, "to kiss all events of the Divine Providence," and to believe that if we be good, they shall turn to our good. Let us, every one of us, comply with the open and visible ends of God's judgments upon ourselves and others, which is, to search and try our ways, and to return unto the Lord; and for the rest, let us believe that it is best for us, that things are as they are; that "his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

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2. Let us not be rash in our censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God upon others; let us not wade beyond our depth into the secrets of God: for "who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" Let us not be hasty and peremptory to pass sentence upon others, because of any evil or calamity that befals them. We may be as severe to ourselves as we please, this is safe and prudent; but "who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" What our Saviour said in the case of the woman accused of adultery, is very applicable to those who are so forward to censure others, as the causes of God's judgments; "He that is without sin, let him throw the first stone." If there be any man that is not conscious to himself that ever he offended and provoked God, that man may have leave to lay all the fault of God's judgments upon others.

God hath of late years in his providence towards this nation so ordered his judgments, and they have fallen with so great an equality upon all sorts of men, that we cannot without great rashness fix the cause of them upon any particulars; but, however, this does not appertain to us, to pry into the secret reasons of God's dispensations; that which properly belongs to us, is to take off our eyes from others, and to look into ourselves; and if we would do this, we should see reason enough for God's judgments, and great cause to admire his mercy and goodness to us, that he hath been pleased to spare us, when he hath ruined so many others.

So that the proper use of all the judgments of God upon others, is, to bring us to a consideration of ourselves and our own ways, and to argue ourselves into repentance. We should reason thus:

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The judgments of God, which have fallen here and there upon others, were intended for terror to us, and if we still continue impenitent, if we be unreformed by these providences of God, which were purposely designed and intended for our amendment: what can we expect, but that God should also send upon us the like or greater calamities, and that "except we repent, we should all likewise perish?"

I cannot apply these words as our Saviour does, because, as I told you, they are probably a prediction of a particular event to the nation of the Jews, in case they continued impenitent; which they did, and this prophecy was afterward sadly fulfilled upon them in the utter ruin and destruction of that nation: but this we may assuredly say, from the warrant of the general tenor of Scripture, that if, notwithstanding these great judgments of God which have been upon us, and have made such fearful desolations among us, we do not "search and try our ways, and turn to him who have smitten" others for a warning to us, we have reason to fear, that we shall suffer in the same manner, or that God will bring some greater temporal judgments upon us, and "be angry with us, until he hath consumed us."

But whatever God may do, as to temporal judgments, this we are as sure of, as the word of God can make us, that there is a sad fate hangs over all impenitent sinners, which, however they may escape in this world, will certainly fall upon them in the next. "God hath sworn in his wrath, that such shall not enter into his rest." He is immutably determined to make such for ever miserable, as, by their final obstinacy and impenitency, refuse to be happy.

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And of this terrible doom the judgments here in the text are but an imperfect type and representation. How glad would sinners then be, to suffer only such things as the Galileans did! what a favour would they esteem it, to have no worse fate than those eighteen men, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell! and to be crushed under the weight of the heaviest rocks and mountains, and there to lie hid for ever, "from the face of Him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" No, it is a more fearful ruin, a destruction infinitely more terrible, that attends those in another world, who will not repent in this life, even "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And how great and fearful that is, is not to be expressed in words, nor can we frame any perfect idea of it from any of those pains and sufferings which we are acquainted with in this world: for "who knows the power of God's anger?" who can conceive the utmost of what omnipotent Justice is able to do to sinners?

Nor have we any reason in the mean time to think that God will put a stop to temporal judgments; but that if we be not reformed by all those terrible things which our eyes have seen, God will "punish us yet seven times more for our sins." If we still persist in our atheism and profaneness, in our contempt of God and his worship, in our abominable lusts and impieties; what can we look for, but greater judgments, and a more fiery indignation to consume us and our habitations?

Methinks nothing is a sadder presage of greater calamities, and a more fearful ruin yet to befal us, than that we have hitherto been so little reformed by those loud and thick vollies of judgments which

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have already been thundered out upon us. This was that which at last brought so terrible a destruction upon the Egyptians, that they were hardened under ten plagues. To be impenitent under the judgments of God, which are so mercifully designed to reclaim and reform us, is to poison ourselves with that which was intended for our physic, and, by a miraculous kind of obstinacy, to "turn the rods of God into serpents." "Oh that we were wise, that we understood this, and that we would consider our latter end!"

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SERMON CCLIV.

[Preached at the Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, in September, 1661.]

OF THE RULE OF EQUITY TO BE OBSERVED AMONG MEN.

Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—MATT. vii. 12.

THESE words being brought in by way of inference from something said before, we must look back a little to find out the relation of them to the former verses. At the seventh verse Christ commands us to ask of God those things which we want; to encourage us to ask, he promises us we should receive; to induce us to believe this promise, he puts a temporal case:—Our earthly fathers, who are evil, give us good things when we ask them: how much more easily may we believe this of a good God of infinite goodness? Now as we desire God should give us those things we ask, so we should do to others; and not only so, but universally in all other things, what we would that men should do to us, that we should do to others. "That men should do unto you;" though the persons be expressed, yet we may take it impersonally, by an usual Hebraism, as if it had been said, "whatever you would should be done unto you;" leaving the person to be supplied in the largest sense: thus, "whatever you would should be done unto you by God or men; this is the law

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and the prophets," *i.e.* this is the sum of the Old Testament, so far as concerns our duty to our neighbour.

The observation which ariseth from the words, is this:

The great rule of equity in all our dealings with men is this: to do as we would be done unto.—This rule hath been otherwise expressed, but not more emphatically in any other form of words than this here in the text: (Matt. xxii. 39.) "Love thy neighbour as thyself:" this requires, that we should bear the same affection to our neighbour, which we would have him bear to us: but the rule in the text expressly requires, that we should do the same offices to others, which we would have them do to us. Severus, the emperor, as the historian Lampridius tells us, did learn this rule of Christians, and did much reverence Christ and Christianity for it; but he expressed it negatively, *Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris.* Now this forbids us to do injuries to others, but doth not so expressly command us to do kindnesses and courtesies.

In speaking to this rule, I shall give you,

I. The explication of it.

II. The grounds of it.

III. The instances wherein we ought principally to practise it.

I. For explication, the meaning of it is this: "Put thyself into the case and circumstances of every man with whom thou hast to do; that is, suppose thou wert he, and as he is, and he were thyself, and as thou art: that, then, which thou wouldest desire he should do to thee, that do thou to him; and that, which thou wouldest be unwilling he should do to thee, do not thou to him." Now this

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is an exact rule, for we are very curious in determining our own privileges, and what duty others owe to us: just so much as we take to ourselves, we must allow to others; what we expect from others, when we are in such circumstances, we must do the same to them in the like. And this is a plain and easy rule. Many men cannot tell what is law, or justice, or right, in such a case; many cannot deduce the laws of nature one from another: but there is no man but can tell what it is that he would have another man do to him: every man can take his own actions, and put them into the other scale, and suppose—If this, that I do now to another, were to be done to me, should I like it? Should I be pleased and contented with it? And thus, by changing the scale, his own self-love, and self-interest, and other passions, will add nothing to the weight; for that self-interest, which makes a man covetous, and inclines him to wrong another man for his own advantage, makes him likewise (when the scales are changed) unwilling that another man should wrong him. That self-conceit which makes a man proud, and apt to scorn and despise others, makes him unwilling that another should contemn him.

I question not but by this time you understand the meaning of the rule; but we are not yet past all difficulties about it. Three things are to be done, before this rule will be of use to us:

1. We must make it appear, that it is reasonable.
2. Make it certain; for till it be certain, it cannot be a rule.
3. Make it practicable.

1. We must make it appear to be reasonable. The difficulty about the reasonableness of it is this: According to this rule I shall be obliged to do that

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many times which is sinful; and to omit that which is a necessary duty. I will give two or three instances. Saul would have had his armour-bearer to have killed him: might he therefore have killed his armour-bearer, if he had been willing, and had desired it? I may not be an instrument or furtherer of another man's sin, though I were so wicked as to desire, that another would be so to me. If I were a child, I would not have my father correct me; or a malefactor, I would not have the magistrate cut me off. Must there therefore be no correction or punishment? Now because of these, and the like instances, which may be given, the rule is necessarily to be understood of things that may be done or omitted, *i. e.* which are not unlawful or unreasonable. Saul might not kill his armour-bearer; I may not further another man's sin, in the cases propounded; because these things may not be done, they are morally impossible, that is, unlawful. A parent or magistrate may not wholly omit correction or punishment, because such omission would tend to the ruin of good manners and of human society.

2. We must make the rule certain. The difficulty about the certainty of it is this: Everlasting disputes will arise about what is lawful and reasonable, and unlawful and unreasonable. Now we must reduce it to a certainty thus: Whatever I would that another should do to me, that I should do to him, unless the thing be plainly and evidently unlawful or unreasonable. And this cuts off all disputes: for though there may be perpetual disputes about what is lawful and reasonable, or the contrary; yet there can be no dispute about the unlawfulness and unreasonableness of those things which are plainly and evidently so; for that which is

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plain and evident, is out of all dispute. To confirm this, let us consider another text, (Phil. iv. 8.) where the apostle exhorts Christians to follow whatever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure; and as a discovery of what things are such, he adds, whatever things are lovely, of good report, and praiseworthy; that is, whatever things are amiable, well spoken of, and praised by wise and good men, who are the only competent judges of these things, if they be not plainly contrary to truth, or honesty, or justice, or purity, follow these things. And if this be not the meaning, those words, lovely, of good report, praiseworthy, are superfluous, and do not at all direct our conversation, which certainly the apostle intended to do by them.

3. We must make it practicable. There are two things which make the practice of it difficult:

1. A seeming contradiction in the rule.

2. Partiality in judging of the circumstances of other men's conditions and our own.

1. A seeming contradiction in the rule; which you will see in these instances. If I desire a thing, I would not have another stand in competition with me for it. If another desire a thing, I would not have him think much, that I stand in competition with him. If I be indebted to another, I would not have him arrest me. If another be indebted to me, I would not have him think much, that I arrest him. When we sell, we care not how dear; when we buy, we care not how cheap. Now if this were a real contradiction in the rule, it were impossible it should be put in practice; but it is only a contradiction in our wills, which must thus be reconciled to the rule:

(1.) We must consider, which of these wills is most reasonable, and the greater reason and equity

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must carry it; and that which is plainly unreasonable, in comparison of the other, is not to be regarded. If we consider the two first instances, this is most reasonable—that where men have an equal right, they should be allowed an equal liberty to use that right. Another man hath as much right to stand in competition with me for any thing, as I to stand in competition with him; and to arrest me in case of debt, as I to arrest him: and it is plainly unreasonable, that I should use this right, and another be debarred from it.

(2.) If both these contradictory wills be plainly unreasonable, as in the third instance of buying and selling, they must be accommodated by finding out such a medium, as is equally and mutually good for all buyers and sellers; that is, such a proportion of gain may be taken, and must be allowed to be taken, as will be equally and mutually good for all buyers and sellers.

2. Another difficulty in the practice of this rule ariseth from men's partiality in judging of the circumstances of other men's conditions and their own. We are apt to lessen the circumstances of another man's condition, and to overvalue our own. Another man's concernments seem less to us than they are, and our own greater than they are. Now this difficulty will most eminently appear in cases of passion and interest, and those subordinate relations, which are at the greatest distance. Another man provokes me; I revenge myself on him. One asks me, Would you be contented to be thus dealt withal? I am ready to answer, Yea, if I should so provoke another. I aggravate the fault of his provocation, and lessen that of my own revenge: here is passion. I desire a courtesy of a man, which he

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cannot conveniently do for me; he denies me; I think much at him, because I judge the courtesy less, and his obligations to do it greater, than indeed it is: here is interest. I think, if I were a father, I should not carry myself so severely towards my children; if I were a master, I should give more liberty to servants, and use them with a greater familiarity; if I were a minister, I should not gall the consciences of people by so free and open a reproof of sin; if I were a magistrate, I should make other laws, or punish some crimes more or less severely. Now if men frequently thus mis-judge, how shall this rule be put in practice?

To remove these difficulties, as much as may be, and to make the practice of this rule more easy, observe these rules:

1. Labour to understand truly every man's condition, so far as you have opportunity. This is easily said; but how shall we come to do it? Thus: when you are in any condition, observe diligently the motions of your own mind, and how your affections then work, and what apprehensions you then have of things, and what it is that, in such a condition, you desire and expect from others; and labour to remember this, when you are out of that condition, and to retain the sense which you then had of things.

2. In cases wherein you are inexperienced, and which you cannot reasonably be presumed to understand, partly because of your distance from that condition, partly because of the opposition of your own interest, and partly because of the mists and clouds of your own passion; trust the concurrent experience of others, who are in that condition, and think, that you ought not to do that to another,

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which the generality of mankind count grievous; and that fit to be done, which the most and wisest in such a condition and relation do usually expect. If men, when they are under and lie at the mercy of others, generally desire, that clemency and moderation should be used towards them, how just soever thou mayest think thy severity is, and that thou wouldest be contented, that another should deal so with thee; yet do not trust thy present apprehensions of things, but believe, that thou wilt have the same sense of things, when they lie heavy upon thee, with the rest of mankind; and when thou art in their circumstances, thou wilt desire quarter, as they do. In like manner, that respect and obedience, which parents, and masters, and magistrates do generally expect (even the best and wisest of them), that do thou pay to them; and though it may have some appearance of rigour and injustice, yet believe, that when thou comest to be in the same relation, thou wilt expect the same things as they do: and that thou dost now judge otherwise, proceeds from thy inexperience or distance from that condition, or from passion and opposition of interest.

3. Conclude, that in cases betwixt superiors and inferiors, the partiality is usually on the inferior's side; and it is reasonable thus to conclude, both because inferiors have seldom had experience of the other condition, as superiors usually have had; (a child hath not been a parent, or a servant ordinarily a master, or a subject a magistrate; but all parents have been children, and most masters have been servants, and many magistrates subjects, and so they have had experience of both conditions;) and likewise, because inferiors cannot so well see

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the condition and circumstances of those that are above them, as those that are above can of those that are below them; they have the advantage of ground, and better opportunities of knowledge.

4. In judging of your present condition and circumstances, always abate something for the presence of them, and for self-love, and self-interest, and other passions. He that doth not consider, how apt every man is unequally to favour himself, doth not know the littleness and narrowness of human nature. We are near to ourselves, and our own interest is near to us, and we see it in its full proportions, and with all possible advantages. Other men and their interests are at a distance from us, and seem less to us than they are. Now we must make abatements for this, according to that experience which we have had of our own mistakes; which if we will observe, as we pass from one condition into another, we may easily be convinced, how great many times they are.

II. For the grounds of this: the equity of this rule stands upon these foundations:

1. All men are equal in many things, and those the greatest things. Now I should deal equally with him, whom I acknowledge to be mine equal. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. ii. 10.) Are we not all made of the same materials? "Is it not appointed for all men once to die?" (Heb. ix. 27.) and after death to stand before the impartial judgment of God? We have all the same notions of right and wrong; we are all obnoxious to one another, and may be all beneficial one to another; we all love ourselves, and study the advancement of our interest and happiness. Thus far equal.

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2. In most of those things wherein we are unequal, the inequality is not considerable, so as to be a ground of any unequal dealing with one another. As to strength of body, whatever the difference be, the inequality is not considerable, because, as to the greatest effects of strength, there is an equality. Every man that will venture his own life, may take away another man's, either by open force or by surprise. As to abilities of mind (which we usually call parts) there is originally a great equality, especially if that received opinion be true, that souls are equal: and, as the French philosopher Des Cartes has ingeniously observed, there is this notable sign of the equality of men's understandings; *Nulla res* (saith he) *æquabilius inter homines distributa est quam bona mens*, &c. "Nothing is more equally divided among men, than a good understanding. Men will acknowledge others to be richer and stronger than themselves; few will acknowledge others to be wiser, or to have better parts than themselves. Every man thinks himself to have so good a proportion of parts and wisdom, that even those who are most covetous, and have the most insatiable desires as to other things, and whom nature could never satisfy in any thing else, yet would not desire to have more wit than they have, or exchange their parts with any man." Now there is no better sign of an equal distribution of things, than that every man is contented with his share. Now because all men generally think thus, it is to be presumed, that all are not deceived; but that there is some real equality, which is the ground of this conceit. A

Dominus est alterius vitæ quicunque contemnit suam.

Dissertat. de Methodo.

Qui velit ingenio cedere, rarus est.

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difference indeed must be granted, but which ariseth usually from one of these two causes; either an unequal exercise of our parts, or an unequal temper of body. Now those who are so happy, as to exercise their understandings more than others, are very often rather conceited, that they are wiser than others, than really so; for the greatest clerks are not always the wisest men. Those who are unhappy in the temper of their bodies, are thereby inclined, how weak soever they be, to conceit themselves as wise as others. So that whatever real inequality there be, conceit levels all again. So that whether men be really wise, or only think themselves so, it makes no difference as to men's dealing one with another; for they, that think themselves equal, will not deal but upon equal terms.

Politic. c. 3. So that Aristotle's pretty notion, that wise men are born to govern, and fools to obey, signifies little in this case; for there are but few such fools in the world, but would govern if they could. So that by virtue of wisdom or parts, no man can challenge a privilege or prerogative to himself above others, which another will not pretend to as well as he.

3. In all those things wherein men are unequal, the inequality is not fixed and constant, but mutable and by turns. All things that belong to us, are either the endowments of the mind, the accidents of the body, or the circumstances of our outward estate. Now those that are most unequal in any of these, may be equal; for the inequality may turn, and be as much on the other side. A disease may ruin the most happy and excellent memory, and make a man forget his own name; a little knock on any side of the head may level the highest un-

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derstanding with the meanest; beauty, health, and strength, may be blasted by a disease, or a thousand other accidents; riches, and honour, and reputation, are the most slippery and brittle things that belong to us; and, when these are gone, friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. Now why should I despise another man, when I may be as silly as he? or bear down another by my strength, when I may be as weak as he? or insult over another's poor and low condition, when a day may level me with his meanness, and raise him to be as great and rich as I am?

4. Another ground is, the mutual and universal equity and advantage of this rule. Upon those terms I and all men shall be equally dealt with: it will be well with me, and well with all men. The observation of this rule would secure peace to the world: and, if it were generally practised, those few that should offend against it, would be looked upon as the pests and troublers of human society. As by the violation of this rule every man becomes a wolf and beast of prey to another, so by the observation of it every man would be a god to another; men would be full of mutual goodness, and pity, and compassion; they would be mutual benefactors one to another. All men would be as happy, as it is possible for them to be in this world, and no man could be miserable, if it were in the power of his neighbour to help him.

5. The last ground I shall mention is, the absurdity and inconvenience of the contrary.

And this is the most proper way of proving this; for, as Aristotle tells us, first principles, which are evident by their own light, cannot be proved by way of demonstration, but of conviction. As thus:

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contradictions cannot be true at once: this cannot be demonstrated *a priori*, because there is nothing true before it, to prove it by: therefore whoever shall deny it, must be convinced of the truth of it, by shewing the absurdities of the contrary. In like manner this being one of the first principles of human society, that we should use no more liberty towards other men, than we would allow them to use towards us; the best way to convince any man of the reasonableness and equity of it, will be to shew him the inconveniences of the contrary. Wherever this principle is violated, men will think themselves injured; where men are injured, they will be apt to vindicate themselves. Hence come contention and wars, which loose the bands of human society; or, if a man can pardon an injury, that hath received one, yet he that hath done it cannot believe so, but he will fear revenge; and fear of being oppressed makes a man seek to anticipate and prevent another: so that every injury endangers the peace and security of mankind, and lays the foundation of perpetual mischief; for, by the same reason, that I injure any man, I am obliged to ruin him.

He that breaks this rule, doth what he can to break human society; that is, to spoil himself of all common protection, and to leave himself to stand upon his guard against all the world; in which state no man can hope to continue, that is not wiser and stronger than all the world. Aristotle tells us, "He that desires to be alone, must either be a god, or a wild beast;" that is, he must either be self-sufficient, and stand in need of nothing; or else be wild and savage, and delight in cruelty and mischief.

Ἢ θηρίον ἢ θεός. Pol. c. 2.

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III. The instances wherein we ought chiefly to practise this rule, are these:

1. In matters of civil respect and conversation, I must treat every man with that fair respect I would have another to shew me. We must accommodate ourselves to men's particular tempers, and not be froward, or intractable, or tenacious of our own humour, especially when it lies in another man's way: but we must be apt to recede and give way, that there may be room for other men's tempers and humours, as well as ours: our humour must not take up all the world. Those who want this complaisance, are in society (as one ingeniously compares them) like irregular stones in a building, which are full of roughness and corners; they take up more room than they fill; till they be polished and made even, others cannot lie near them: so men of sharp and perverse humours are unsociable, till the ruggedness and asperities of their nature be taken off. We must not carry ourselves insolently, or superciliously, or contemptuously, towards others; we must not be contumelious; nor, by deed or word, countenance or gesture, declare hatred or contempt of others. We must not upbraid one another with any imperfection, or weakness, or deformity; we must not peremptorily contradict others; we must not use to talk things displeasing to others, wherein their credit, or relations, or especially their religion, is concerned. Josephus saith, this was one of Moses' laws (it was a good one, whosever it was) Οὓς ἄλλαι πόλεις νομίζουσι θεοὺς, μηδεὶς βλασφημείτω; "Let no man blaspheme that, which other nations count a God," or make their religion. Not but that every man may confute a false religion, and endeavour by all fair ways to convince

Antiquit. Jud. lib. iv.

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a Jew, or Turk, or heathen; but we may not reproach another man's religion, or provoke any man in ordinary conversation by unseasonable and uncivil reflections upon it: for we are with meekness to convince gainsayers, to reprove men for their sins, but not to upbraid them with them. We must give no offence to the Jew, or to the gentile, remembering always, that "the wrath of man doth not work the righteousness of God;" and that Michael, the archangel, when he contended with the devil, did not "bring a railing accusation against him;" he did not revile him; no, not in the heat of dispute. And there is great reason, why we should thus carry ourselves towards others, because we ourselves would not be contemned or despised; we would not have any man jeer us, or insult over us, or upbraid us, or peevishly contradict us, or affront us by speaking unhandsomely of us, or of our relations, or our religion. Now if we would have others to consider us, we must not neglect them: if we would be taken notice of for somebody, we must not overlook others with contempt. Every thing thinks itself considerable; and there is nothing comes sooner to us, or continues longer with us, than a sense of our own worth; and we judge ill of human nature, if we think another man is not as impatient of rude and uncivil usage as we are. Nothing would be despised; a worm would not be trod upon; nay, men do usually overvalue themselves, and are apt to think, that they are owners of that singular worth, which may command respect from all men; and that every one, that passeth by, ought to fall down, and do obeisance to them. They have Joseph's dream waking, they think all men's sheaves bow to their sheaves; they think every man

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takes notice of them, and observes their carriage and actions, when probably not one of a thousand ever took them into consideration, or asked who they were. Now we must consider, that it is a hundred to one but there is a little of this vanity in us also, and that we do usually look for more respect than is due. Therefore it will not be amiss, in our respects towards others, *largiri aliquid*, to give men something above what we think they deserve; and the rather, because civil respect is cheap, and costs us nothing, and we expect from others full as much as comes to our share; for it is a mistake to think that we do but righteously esteem ourselves, and that we have no more than a just value of our own worth.

2. In matters of kindness and courtesies, we must be useful to one another. I would have no man churlish to me, but ready to gratify me, and do me a kindness. Do I think much to be denied a reasonable favour, and doth not another so too? We would have all men love us, that is, bear such an affection to us, that, when it falls in their way, they should be ready to do us a courtesy. We would not have courtesies done in a discourteous manner, extorted by importunity, or upbraided to us afterwards. Let us likewise dispense favours with a liberal hand and a cheerful countenance, that men may see, that they come from a kind heart, and a real good will.

3. In matters of charity and compassion: if any man be in misery, pity him, and help him to your power; if any be in necessity and want, contribute to his relief, without too scrupulous inquiries about him; for we would be thus dealt with ourselves, we would not have others to harden their hearts,

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or shut up their bowels of compassion against us. Is any man cast down? do not insult over him, and trample upon him; do not look upon him with scorn, and rejoice over him in the day of distress. *Res est sacra miser;* "Persons in misery are sacred, and not to be violated." When you see any man in calamity, think ye hear him say to you with Job, "I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's stead: I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you; but I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief." (Job xvi. 4, 5.)

4. In matters of forbearance and forgiveness. We stand in need of forbearance and pardon from others, from God and men; we should be loath God should take advantage against us upon every provocation, and let fly at us with a thunderbolt every time we offend him. We would not have men storm and fall into passion with us upon every slight occasion. I would have great allowances given to me; I would have my ignorance, and inadvertency, and mistakes, and present temper, and all occasions and provocations, and every thing considered. And when I have done amiss, upon acknowledgment of my fault, I would be forgiven and received to favour. Now if we would be thus dealt with, we must bear with others: the best men need some grains of allowance; *nullum unquam ingenium placuit sine venia;* no man was ever so perfect, so accomplished, so unexceptionable, but there was something or other in his carriage that needed pardon. Every man hath a particular humour; we must give some allowance for that: every man is subject to mistake, we must allow for that too; and if a man have committed a fault, we must accept of an ingenuous ac-

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knowledgment, and be ready to grant him peace. There is a shame and disdain in human nature of too vile a submission; therefore we must not bring a man too low, when we have him at advantage.

5. In matter of report, and representation of other men and their actions. We must not take up a rash prejudice, or entertain a sinister apprehension of any upon slight grounds. Do not represent any man, his words or actions, at a disadvantage; make the best of every thing. A man's good name is like a looking-glass, nothing is sooner cracked, and every breath can sully it. Handle every man's reputation with the same tenderness thou wouldest have every man use towards thine. Do not slander or defame any man, or rejoice to hear other men's miscarriages ripped open; do not account it an entertainment to censure and backbite all the world.

6. In matters of trust and fidelity. Where I place a confidence, and repose a trust, I would not be deceived; I must not deceive another, nor let any man fall, that leans upon me. If a man trust me with the management of his business, or lodge a secret with me, or put his life into my power, or commit the care of his estate or children to me after his death; these are ingenuous trusts, and must be discharged with the same faithfulness we expect from others.

7. In matter of duty and obedience. We must give that honour to our parents, which we would expect from our children; and pay that reverence to masters, which we would exact from our servants. We must rise up before the grey head, and give respect to old age; for let us not think, but that the change of relation and of age, will have the same effect upon us, which it hath upon the rest of the

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world. It is a folly to talk, that when we are old, we shall be pleased with the insolencies of youth; when we are masters, we shall not be at all offended with the contemptuous carriage of our servants; that it will not touch our hearts to have our children undutiful and void of respect, to see the fruit of our body unnatural and unkind to us.

8. In matters of freedom and liberty, which are not determined by any natural or positive law. We must permit as much to others as we assume to ourselves; and this is a sign of an equal and temperate person, and one that justly values his own understanding and power. But there is nothing wherein men usually deal more unequally with one another, than in indifferent opinions and practices of religion. I account that an indifferent opinion, which good men differ about; not that such an opinion is indifferent as to truth or error, but as to salvation or damnation it is not of necessary belief. By an indifferent practice in religion, I mean that which is in its own nature neither a duty nor a sin to do or omit. Where I am left free, I would not have any man to rob me of my liberty, or intrench upon my freedom; and because he is satisfied such a thing is lawful and fit to be done, expect I should do it, who think it otherwise; or because he is confident such an opinion is true, be angry with me, because I cannot believe as fast as he. Now if another do ill in doing thus to me, I cannot do well in doing so to another. And do not say, that thou art sure thou art in the right, and he, that differs from thee, in the wrong; and therefore thou mayest impose upon him, though he may not upon thee. Hath not every man this confidence of his own opinion and practice? And usually the weakest cause bears

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up with the greatest confidence. Now if thou wouldest not have another, who is confident he is in the right, impose upon thee, do not thou impose upon another for all thy confidence. We should rather be modest, and say every one to ourselves, "How came I to be so much wiser than other men? Which way came the Spirit of the Lord from so many wise and pious men to speak unto me? is it a peculiar privilege granted to me, that I cannot be mistaken? or are not they most of all mistaken, who think they cannot mistake? If then I be but like other men, why should I take so much upon me, as if my understanding were to be a rule, and my apprehensions a standard to the whole world? as if when another man differs from me, I did not differ as much from him. Why may not another man understand the thing better than I do, or what crime is it, if he understand it not so well? were all men's understandings cast in the same mould? is it presumption for any man to know more than I do, or a sin to know less?" Job doth well reprove this self-conceit. (Job xii. 2, 3.) His friends would needs bear him down, and were very angry with him, that he was not of their mind, and would not acknowledge all to be true of himself, which they said against him. He takes them up sharply: "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you; but I have understanding as well as you, and I am not inferior to you.—Who knoweth not such things as these?" Let not any man think, that he hath engrossed all the knowledge of the world to himself, but others know the same things which he doth, and many things better than he.

9. In matters of commerce, and contracts which arise from thence. Now a contract is a mutual

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transferring of right. When I buy any thing of another, he makes over the right of such a commodity to me for so much money, or other valuable thing, the right whereof I make over to him. Now in this kind of intercourse, we are to be governed by this great rule. In making of contracts we must *agere bona fide*, deal honestly and truly: in performing of contracts we must *liberare fidem*, satisfy the engagement we have made; for thus we ourselves would be dealt withal.

Now if any shall desire to be more particularly satisfied, what that exact righteousness is, which in matter of contracts ought to be observed betwixt man and man? I must confess this is a difficult question, and to be handled very modestly by such, as acknowledge themselves unacquainted with the affairs of the world, and the necessities of things, and the particular and hidden reasons of some kind of dealings; for he, who is ignorant of these, may easily give rules, which will not comply with the affairs of the world. He may complain of that which cannot be otherwise, and blame some kind of dealings, which are justifiable from particular reasons, not obvious to any man, who is unseen in the way of trade. Besides, there are many cases fall under this question, which are very nice, but of great consequence; and the greater caution and tenderness ought to be used in the resolution of them, because they are matters of constant practice, and the greatest part of mankind are concerned in them. Now it is a dangerous thing to mistake in those things, in which many persons are interested, especially if they be things of such a vast difference, as good and evil, right and wrong are: for if that be determined to be lawful, which is unlawful, men are

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led into sin; if that be determined to be unlawful which is lawful, men are led into a snare: for if this determination be to the prejudice of men in their callings, it is a hundred to one but common example and private interest will make many continue in that practice; and then the mischief is this—though men do that which is lawful and right, yet they are staggered by the authority and confidence of him, who hath determined it unlawful; and so have some reluctancy in their consciences in the doing of it; and this, by accident, becomes a great sin to them. And when upon a sick-bed, or any other occasion, they come to be touched with the sense of sin, this will be matter of greater horror and affrightment to them, than a real sin, which they committed ignorantly, and were afterwards convinced of. Upon all these considerations, I ought to proceed with great wariness in the answering of this question. Therefore I shall content myself with speaking those things which are clear and evident, though they be but general, rather than venture out of my depth, by descending into particulars, and such things as are out of my notice.

I shall, therefore,

I. Lay down the general rule.

II. Some propositions, which may tend to the explication of it.

III. Some special rules for the directing of our commerce and intercourse.

I. The general rule is this: That which it is not unreasonable for me to desire to gain by another, when I am to sell, that I should allow another to gain by me, when I am to buy; and that which is not unreasonable another should gain by me, when I am to buy, that, and no more, I may gain by another, when I am to sell.

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II. The propositions, which I shall lay down for the further explication of this rule, are these:

1. In buying and selling, such a proportion of gain may be taken, and ought to be allowed, as is mutually and universally best. And this every man is presumed to desire, because this will be certainly good for every one; whereas, if it be not universally good, it may be bad for any one; if it be not mutually so, it will be bad for me by turns.

2. That proportion of gain, which allows a reasonable compensation for our time, and pains, and hazard, is universally and mutually best. If the compensation be unreasonably great, it will be bad for the buyer; if unreasonably little, it will be bad for the seller; if equal and reasonable, it will be good for all.

3. That proportion of gain, which, in common intercourse and use of bargaining among those who understand what they buy and sell, is generally allowed, ought to be esteemed a reasonable compensation. This is evident, because the common reason of mankind doth best determine what is reasonable. Therefore, those who speak of commutative justice, and place it in the equality of things contracted for, need explaining; for value is not a thing absolute and certain, but relative and mutable. Now to fix the value of things, as much as may be, this rule is commonly given—*Tanti unumquodque valet, quanti vendi potest;* "Every thing is worth so much as it may be sold for;" which must not be understood too particularly, as if the present and particular appetite of the contractor were to be the rule; for every thing is not worth so much as any body will give for it; but so much as, in common intercourse among knowing persons, it will give. For this I take for a truth, that, in the ordinary plenty of commodities, there is

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an ordinary and usual price of them known to the understanding persons of every profession. If I be out in this, the matter of gain will be more uncertain than I thought of.

4. A reasonable compensation doth not consist in an indivisible point, but hath a certain latitude, which likewise is to be determined by the common intercourse and practice of men. Suppose ten in the hundred be the usual gain made of such a commodity, eleven the highest, nine the lowest; the latitude is betwixt nine and eleven.

5. Every man engaged in a way of commerce, is presumed to understand, unless the contrary be evident. So that, keeping within the latitude of a lawful gain, I may use my skill against another man in driving a bargain; but if his want of skill be evident, that is, sufficiently known to me, I must use him as I would do a child, or other unskilful person; that is, fairly.

6. Where the price of things alters (as it often doth almost in all things), no other rule can be given but the common and market-price. There are some things which are fixedly certain, as coin. There I have no latitude at all; I may not put off a piece of money for more than its value, though a person, out of ignorance, would take it for more. There are some commodities, which, in ordinary plenty, being of ordinary goodness, have an usual price. Here I have but little latitude, viz. that of the market. In the rising and falling of commodities, I have a greater latitude; but usually, in these cases, the market sets some kind of price, unless I be the sole master of a commodity; and here the latitude is the greatest, and my own reason and moderation must limit me. And if any ask, why I make the market the

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rule, seeing this seems to be as if I should say, Let every man get as much as he can, for so men in the market do; I answer, The market is usually more reasonable than the particular appetites of men; and though every man be apt to get as much as he can, yet men generally have an appetite to sell, as well as to sell dear, and that checks this; and men are brought to moderation, because they are unwilling to lose custom: so that he who governs himself by the market prices, not catching at particular advantages, seems to me to follow the safest rule.

7. There are some things allowed in common intercourse, which are so rigorous, that they are hardly just, which are rather tolerable than commendable. I will give one instance instead of many: A man hath a small piece of ground lying within another man's estate; he is willing to sell, but requires, possibly, forty or sixty years' purchase, or more, according to the particular appetite of the purchaser. This seems not to be so agreeable to this great rule of equity. I doubt not but some advantage may be made in this case, and I will not set any peremptory limits: I shall only say this in general, we should set a moderate value upon another man's appetite and convenience.

8. It is to be feared, that something very like unrighteousness is woven into the mysteries of most trades; and, like Phidias's image in Minerva's shield, cannot be defaced without the ruin of it. I think this is not a groundless jealousy, but the confession and complaint of the most knowing and understanding persons in most human affairs. I shall instance only in the slightness of work, the imbasing of commodities, and setting them off by indirect advantages. I can only bewail this; for unless the

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world could generally be convinced of this, it is not like to be amended. Perfection is not to be looked for in this imperfect state; we must be content if things are passable.

9. Nevertheless, we ought to aspire after as great a degree of righteousness and equity, as the condition of human affairs will admit. We should bend all our endeavours to the bettering of the world, and not only avoid all unrighteousness, but draw back, as much as in us lies, from the indirect practices of the world, and from all appearance of unrighteousness.

III. The more particular rules are these:

1. Impose upon no man's ignorance or unskilfulness. Thou mayest set a just value upon thine own commodity, but not a price upon another man's head. I mean, thou mayest not rate a man's want of understanding, or set a tax upon his ignorance; therefore, take no advantage of children, or any other incompetent persons; and do not only use them with justice, but with ingenuity, as those that repose a trust in you, and cast themselves upon your equity. And here are some questions to be resolved.

Quest. 1. If a man be otherwise skilful in his calling, may not I take advantage of his ignorance of a particular circumstance, wherein the contract is concerned?

Ans. I will tell you how Tully resolves this in a particular case: "A man (says he) brings a ship of corn from Alexandria to Rhodes, in a time of great famine; he may have what price he will; he knows of a great many more ships, that will be there next day: may he conceal this from the Rhodians?" He determines peremptorily he may not. If we will be worse than heathens—I say no more. De Officiis, l. 3.

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Quest. 2. But may we not take advantage of the ignorance of the seller, though not of the buyer? The difference is, he that offers to sell any thing, at such a price, is willing so to part with it; now there is no wrong to him that is willing.

I answer, A man is so far willing, as he is knowing: Aristotle tells us, that ignorance is a sort of unwillingness. If a man, out of forgetfulness, or want of consideration, or sufficient understanding of his own calling, mistake himself, I may not make a prize of this man's weakness: for he is only willing to sell it so upon supposition he remembers right, and understands himself aright; but the thing being really worth more, he is absolutely unwilling, and I am injurious to him in taking advantage.

Quest. 3. May I not sell secret faults and vices in a commodity?

Ans. If the faults be such as men take for granted do often happen, and notwithstanding them they do not account any man to have deceived them, then they are faults pardoned by common consent; but if they be such, as I am grieved at, and think myself not fairly dealt withal, when they happen, then some think it is enough to allow for them in the price. But I think Tully hath determined it better:

Offic. lib. 3. *Ne quid omnino quod venditor novit, emptor ignoret*, "That the buyer should not be left ignorant of any thing that the seller knows." And this seems reasonable, for I know not but another man may value those faults higher than I do; however, it is not so fair for me to make another man's bargain.

2. Impose upon no man's necessity. If a man must needs buy now, or of thee, because none else is near, make no advantage of this.

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3. When God's providence hath put into thy hands some great opportunity and advantage (as by the intervention of some unexpected law, by a sudden war or peace betwixt nations, or by some other casualty) do not stretch it to the utmost. *Fortunam reverenter habe;* "Use this providential advantage modestly;" considering that He, whose blessing gave thee this opportunity, can blast thee a thousand ways.

4. Use plainness in all your dealings. This the Roman laws called, *bona fide agere.* Do not disparage another man's commodity, or raise your own besides truth; this is sinful. Do not insinuate a commendation or disparagement indirectly, thereby to lead a man into an error, that you may draw on a bargain the more easily. Do not (as your phrase is) ask or bid much out of the way; for if this be not simply unlawful, yet it doth not become an honest man. We commend the quakers, because they are at a word in all their dealings: we would be loath not to be counted as good Christians as they are. Let us then do as good things as they do, especially when we account those things praiseworthy; and I am sure this is no ways contrary to justice, and honesty, and truth. I know nothing that gives so real a reputation to that sect as this practice: and would it not adorn those, who account themselves the more sober Christians? If we praise this in others, let us practise it in ourselves. We are apt to value ourselves much by our orthodox judgments; but let us take heed that sectaries do not confute us by their orthodox lives. For the sake of religion, next to your consciences, in all your dealings tender your reputation: for *quod conscientia est apud Deum, id fama est apud homines:* "that

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which conscience is in reference to God, that our reputation is in respect of men."

5. In matters of vanity and fancy, and things which have no certain estimation, use moderation; and so much the rather, because in these thou art left to be thy own judge.

6. Do not go to the utmost of things lawful. He that will always walk upon the brink, is in great danger of falling down: he that will do the utmost of what he may, will sometime or other be tempted to what he should not; for it is a short and easy passage from the utmost limits of what is lawful, to what is evil and unlawful. Therefore, in that latitude, which you have of gain, use favour towards the poor and necessitous, ingenuity towards the ignorant and unskilful, and moderation towards all men.

7. Where you have any doubt about the equity of dealings, choose you the safest part, and that which will certainly bring you peace. For not only a good conscience, but a quiet conscience is to be valued above gain. Therefore in matters of duty do the most; in matters of privilege and divisions of right, and proportions of gain, where there is any doubt, choose the least, for this is always safe.

Thus I have laid down the rule and explained it, and have given as particular directions, as I could safely adventure to do. I must now leave it to every man to apply it more particularly to himself, and to deal faithfully with his own conscience in the use of it. Circumstances, which vary cases, are infinite; therefore, when all is done, much must be left to the equity and chancery of our own breasts. I have not told you how much in the pound you may gain, and no more; nor can I. A man may make a greater

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gain at one time than another of the same thing; he may take those advantages, which the change of things and the providence of God gives him, using them moderately. A man may take more of some persons than of others; provided a man use all men righteously, he may use some favourably. But I have on purpose forborne to descend to too many particularities; among other reasons, for the sake of Sir Thomas More's observation concerning the casuists of his time, who, he saith, by their too particular resolutions of cases, did not teach men *non peccare*, "not to sin," but did shew them, *quam prope ad peccatum liceat accedere sine peccato*; "how near men might come to sin, and yet not sin."

The uses I shall make of all this are these two:

1. Let us not revenge ourselves. The rule is not, we should do to others as they do to us; but as we would have them to do to us; as if it were on purpose to prevent revenge. St. Luke forbids revenge from this rule: (Luke vi. 31, 32.) "For if you love them that love you," &c. but love your enemies. Revenge is the greatest offence against this rule; for he that revengeth an injury, hath received one; he that has received one, knows best what that is, which he would not have another to do to him. The nature of evil and injury is better known to the patient than to the agent. Men know better what they suffer, than what they do; he that is injured, feels it, and knows how grievous it is; and will he do that to another?

2. Let me press this rule upon you: live by it; in all your carriage and dealings with men, let it be present to you. Ask yourselves upon every occasion, "would I, that another should deal thus with me, and carry himself thus towards me?" But

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Lampridius. I shall press this chiefly as to justice and righteousness in our commerce. It is said, that Severus the emperor caused this rule to be written upon his palace, and in all public places. Let it be written upon our houses, and shops, and exchanges. This exhortation is not altogether improper for this auditory. You, that frequent these exercises, seem to have a good sense of that part of religion, which is contained in the first table. Do not, by your violations of the second, mar your obedience to the first: do not prove yourselves hypocrites in the first table, by being wicked in the second. Give not the world just cause to say, that you are ungodly, because they find you to be unrighteous; but manifest your love to God, "whom you have not seen," by your love to your brother, "whom you have seen:" and if any man wrong his brother, he cannot love him. Do not reject or despise this exhortation, under the contemptuous name of morality. Our Saviour tells us, this is a chief part of that, which hath ever been accounted religion in the world. "It is the law and the prophets;" and he, by enjoining it, hath adopted it into Christianity, and made it gospel. We should have an especial love to this precept, not only as it is the dictate of nature, and the law of Moses; not only as it is a Jewish and gentile principle, but as it is of the "household of faith." When the young man told Christ, that he had kept the commandments from his youth, it is said, "Jesus loved him." (Mark x. 20, 21.) Wherever we have learnt to despise morality, Jesus loved it. When I read the heathen writers, especially Tully and Seneca, and take notice, what precepts of morality and laws of kindness are every where in their writings, I am ready to fall

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in love with them. How should it make our blood rise in many of our faces, who are Christians, to hear with what strictness Tully determines cases of conscience, and how generously he speaks of equity and justice towards all men? *Societatis arctissimum vinculum est magis arbitrari esse contra naturam, hominem homini detrahere sui commodi causa, quam omnia incommoda subire:* "This is the strongest bond of society, to account it to be more against nature for any man to wrong another for his own advantage, than to undergo the greatest inconveniences." And again; *Non enim mihi est vita mea utilior, quam animi talis affectus, neminem ut violem commodi mei gratia:* "Nor is my life more dear and profitable to me, than such a temper and disposition of mind, as that I would not wrong any man for my own advantage." Again, *Tollendum est in rebus contrahendis omne mendacium:* "No kind of lying must be used in bargaining." And to mention no more; *Nec ut emat melius, nec ut vendat quicquam, simulabit aut dissimulabit vir bonus:* "A good man will not counterfeit or conceal any thing, that he may buy the cheaper, or sell the dearer." And yet further to check our proneness to despise moral righteousness, I cannot but mention an excellent passage to this purpose, which I have met with in a learned man of our nation: "Two things," saith he, "make up a Christian—a true faith, and an honest conversation; and, though the former usually gives us the title, the latter is the surer: for true profession, without an honest conversation, not only saves not, but increaseth our weight of punishment; but a good life, without true profession, though it brings us not to heaven, yet it lessens the measure of our judgment: so that a moral man so called, is

Off. lib. iii.

Mr. Hales.

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a Christian by the surer side." And afterwards; "I confess," saith he, "I have not yet made that proficiency in the schools of our age, as that I could see, why the second table, and the acts of it, are not as properly the parts of religion and Christianity, as the acts and observation of the first. If I mistake, then it is St. James that hath abused me; for he, describing religion by its proper acts, tells us, that 'pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world:' so that that thing, which, in an especial refined dialect of the new Christian language, signifies nothing but morality and civility, that in the language of the Holy Ghost imports true religion." (Mark xii. 33, 34.) When the scribe told Christ, that to love God with all the heart, &c. and our neighbour as ourselves, was more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices; it is said, "when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." They that would have a religion without moral righteousness, talk indiscreetly, and are farther from the kingdom of God than a mere moral man. If we neglect this part of religion, we disparage the gospel, and abuse our profession; we are but pretenders to Christianity. Plutarch speaks somewhere to this purpose:—He had rather posterity should say, there was never such a man as Plutarch, than that he was a vicious, or cruel, or unjust man. I had rather a man should not call himself a Christian, that he should renounce his title, than that by his life and actions he should represent Christians to the world as oppressors, as unjust and treacherous dealers. If men will only use religion

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to cover their unrighteousness, I had rather they would put off their cloaks, and be knaves *in querpo*, that every body may know them, than that they should go like highwaymen in vizards and disguises, only that they may rob honest men the more securely.

And, to move you to the practice of this rule, I shall only offer to you one consideration, but which hath so much weight in it, that it may be instead of many:—As you deal with others, so ye shall be dealt with. With what measure you mete to others, it shall be measured to you, is a proverbial speech often used by our Saviour, and which, one time or other, you will find to be very significant. God doth many times by his providence order things so, that in this life men's unrighteousness returns upon their own heads, and their violent dealing upon their own pates. There is a divine Nemesis, which brings our iniquities upon ourselves. No man hath any vice or humour alone, but it may be matched in the world, either in its own kind, or in another. If a man be cruel and insolent, a Bajazet shall meet with a Tamerlane: if a man delight to jeer and abuse others, no man hath so good a wit, but another hath as good a memory; he will remember it to revenge it. He that makes a trade of deceiving and cozening others, doth but teach others to cozen him; and there are but few masters in any kind, but are outdone by some of their scholars. But however we may escape the hands of men, how shall we escape our own consciences, either trouble of conscience in this life, or the worm of conscience in the next? How shall we escape the hands of the living God? How shall we escape the damnation of hell? (1 Thess. iv. 6.) "Let no man go beyond, or

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defraud his brother in any matter, for God is the avenger of all such." He will take their cause into his own hands, and render to us according to our cruel and fraudulent dealing with others: (Matt. xviii. 25.) "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you," &c. What our Saviour saith, (Matt. xix. 29.) that there is no man, that denies himself in houses or lands, &c. for Christ's sake and the gospel's, but shall receive in this life a hundred-fold, and in the world to come everlasting life; is true also here. There is no man, that is injurious to his brother, in houses, or lands, or good name, or any other thing, but shall probably receive in this world a hundred-fold; however, without repentance, in the world to come everlasting misery. In the next world men will find, that they have but impoverished themselves by their ill-gotten wealth, and heaped up for themselves treasures of wrath. Read those words, and tremble at them, (Jam. v. 1—5.) "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl, for your misery shall come upon you," &c.

Let us then be persuaded, as we love God, whom we "have not seen," as we love the gospel, which we read and hear every day, and would preserve the reputation of it; as we would better the world, and the condition of mankind; as we love ourselves, and our own peace and happiness; to deal justly and equally with all men. Till we come to live by this rule of equity, we can never hope to see the world a quiet habitation. But if this were practised among us, then glory would dwell in our land; mercy and truth would meet together; righteousness and peace would kiss each other: truth would spring out of the earth, and righteousness would look down from

Psal. lxxxv. 9—13.

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heaven: yea, the Lord would give that which is good, and our land would yield her increase; righteousness would go before him, and set us in the way of his steps.

TO

THE READER.

You have here an end of this great work, and I can now assure you, that I have faithfully discharged what at first I promised, which was, to give you these Sermons truly transcribed from the originals. I have sometimes put two Sermons into one, or three into two (as the Author used to do in those he printed), and if on that account I have left out repetitions, or shortened some things which have been before printed, yet I never altered either the words or sense otherwise than was necessary for the connexion; and as I did this purely to make the work more perfect, I hope I have rather obliged the public, than deserved the censure of any.

By these Sermons you have seen how good and useful a preacher the Author was; and though the publishing of them was all I had to do, yet that the world may see that he was devout as well as eloquent, I have ventured to annex some of his Prayers, with a short Discourse to his Servants before the receiving of the Sacrament, all written by his own hand. These are no great addition to the work; and will, I hope, be valued by some, or at the worst can only be blamed as the indiscreet zeal, rather than any interest or design of the publisher.

R. BARKER.

Brasted, Kent.
Dec. 5, 1703.

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PRAYERS,

COMPOSED BY

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SHORT DISCOURSE TO HIS SERVANTS BEFORE THE SACRAMENT.

A Prayer before the Sermon.

GREAT and glorious Lord God! the High and Holy One, who inhabitest eternity, and dwellest in that light which is not to be approached: we pray thee to look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory, upon us vile and sinful creatures. Have mercy upon us, O Lord! and, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all our transgressions: and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of our hearts, to serve and fear thee for the future, and to keep all thy commandments always, that it may be well with us, and with our children after us. We pray thee, to this end, to write thy law in our hearts, and to put thy fear into our inward parts, that we may never depart from thee.

Grant us the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to become every day better; to reform and amend whatever is amiss in the frame and temper of our minds, or in the course and actions of our lives; to enable us to

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mortify our lusts, to govern our passions, and to order our whole conversation aright; to assist us to all that is good, and to keep us from all evil, and to preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray thee to instruct us in all the particulars of our duty, which we owe to thee and men; that we may herein exercise ourselves always to have consciences void of offence both towards God and towards men; that we may love thee the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength, and may love our neighbour as ourselves; and whatever we would that men should do unto us, that we may do likewise unto them. And let the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation, teach us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; waiting for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And we pray thee to make us sensible of our own frailty, of the shortness and uncertainty of this life, and of the eternity of the next; to make us careful so to live, as we shall wish we had done when we come to die: let our loins always be girded about, and our lamps burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.

We pray thee with us to extend thy goodness to the whole world. Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Pity and relieve the miseries and afflictions of men; especially those in our neighbour nations, who suffer for thy truth and righteousness' sake. Support them,

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O Lord! under their sufferings; and in thy due time deliver them out of them. Bless thy church; reform whatsoever thou seest to be amiss in the belief and lives of Christians, and grant that all those who profess thy name, and the holy religion of our blessed Saviour, may live as it becomes the gospel, and may depart from all iniquity.

In a particular manner we pray thee to be gracious to these sinful nations to which we are related; to pardon our great and crying sins; to prevent those judgments which our sins have justly deserved, and to spare us according to thy great mercy. In a more especial manner, we pray thee to pour down thy blessings upon thy servant and our sovereign, ———, by thy grace King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, and in all causes and over all persons in these his dominions supreme governor. Preserve him in his person; make his government a public blessing to these nations; let religion and righteousness flourish under the influences of it, and let there be abundance of peace in his days. Bless him in his royal relations, ——— and all the royal family. And thou, who art the wise God, and governest all the affairs of the world, be pleased so to bless and direct all public counsels and affairs amongst us, as that they may tend to the advancement of thy glory, the preservation of religion, and the peace and happiness of these kingdoms. Bless, we pray thee, all ranks and orders of men amongst us, and make them all in their several places and stations useful and serviceable to thy glory and to the public good. Bless those to whom thou hast committed the care of instructing and governing thy church, by what titles soever they are distinguished, archbishops,

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bishops, and all others that minister in holy things. We pray thee to make them faithful to that trust which thou hast committed unto them, and to grant that, by their diligent labours, and prudent carriage, and holy and exemplary lives, they may gain many unto righteousness. Bless the two universities of this land; grant that they may answer the ends of their institution, that religion, and learning, and virtue, may be the glory of those places.

We pray thee to bless us, thine unworthy servants, who at this time are assembled and met together in thy name; to be present in the midst of us, and to assist us in the work and service which we are about; and to grant that those truths which shall be delivered to us out of thy word, may have a due effect and influence upon our hearts and lives: all which we humbly beg of thee for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose holy name and words, &c. &c.

A Prayer, which (it is conjectured) he used before composing his Sermons.

O Lord God of truth, I humbly beseech thee to enlighten my mind by thy Holy Spirit, that I may discern the true way to eternal salvation: and to free me from all prejudice and passion, from every corrupt affection and interest that may either blind or seduce me in my search after it.

Make me impartial in my inquiry after truth, and ready, whenever it is discovered to me, to receive it in the love of it, to obey it from the heart, and to practise it in my life, and to continue steadfast in the profession of it to the end of my days.

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I perfectly resign myself, O Lord, to thy conduct and direction, in confidence that thy mercy and goodness is such, that thou wilt not suffer those who sincerely desire to know the truth, and rely upon thy guidance, finally to miscarry.

And if in any thing which concerns the true worship and service of thee, my God, and the everlasting happiness of my soul, I am in any error and mistake, I earnestly beg of thee to convince me of it, and to lead me into the way of truth; and to confirm and establish me in it daily more and more.

And I beseech thee, O Lord, always to preserve in me a great compassion and sincere charity towards those that are in error, and ignorance of thy truth; beseeching thee to take pity on them, and to bring them to the knowledge of it, that they may be saved.

And because our blessed Saviour hath promised, that all that do his will shall know his doctrine: grant, O Lord, that I may never knowingly offend thee in any thing, or neglect to do what I know to be thy will and my duty.

Grant, O heavenly Father, these my humble and hearty requests for his sake, who is the way, the truth, and the life, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers used by him the Day before his Consecration.

MAY 30, 1691, the day before my consecration to the archbishopric, which was on Whitsunday, at St. Mary le-bow, when, on Whitsunday eve, I retired to Edmonton, to spend that day in fasting and prayer, to implore the blessing of Almighty God upon that

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action, and the assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit to be vouchsafed to his sinful and unworthy servant, whom his wise providence, and the importunate desire of their majesties, King William and Queen Mary, the best of princes, (whom God, in great mercy to a most sinful and perverse people, hath by a most signal providence set upon the throne of these kingdoms, and sent, I trust, to be our deliverers and benefactors for many generations yet to come,) have called to the government and conduct of this miserable distracted church in a very difficult and dangerous time.

I began with a short prayer to Almighty God to prepare my heart for the duty of this day, and to assist me in the discharge of it in such a manner as might be acceptable in his sight, through Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer.

I proceeded next to a thanksgiving to Almighty God for his mercy and goodness to me in the conduct of my whole life, from my first entrance into the world to this day, which was to this effect:—

Almighty and eternal Lord God, and most merciful Father, I prostrate myself before thee this day, in a most humble and thankful acknowledgment of thy great mercy and goodness vouchsafed to me a sinful creature, and thy most unprofitable servant, (not worthy to be called thy son) in the conduct of my whole life, from my first coming into the world to this present day.

And in the first place, I desire to bless thy great and glorious name, that I was born of honest and religious parents, though of a low and obscure condition. "Who am I, O Lord God, or what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? and hast regarded me ac- 1 Chron. xvii. 16, 17.

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cording to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God!"

I bless thee likewise for all the happy circumstances of my birth and education; that I was born in a time and place wherein thy true religion was preached and professed. I bless thee for the great care of my good parents to bring me up in the knowledge and fear of thee, the only true God, and of him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life; and I bless thee, my Lord, for him in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, whom, in the fulness of time, thou wast pleased to send into the world to be the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

I bless thee that thou wast pleased to give my ever-honoured and good father the heart to give me, out of the small estate thou gavest him, so liberal an education, whereby I was put into a capacity to serve thee. Forgive, I beseech thee, O Lord, that I have made no better use of the talents and opportunities wherewith thou hast entrusted me, and accept of that little which by thy grace I have been enabled sincerely to do for thee. I bless thee, O Lord, for the continual and bountiful support of thy Providence, whereby thou hast also enabled me to return to my parents and their children the kindness I received from them, and to be still as a father to them. I bless thee that thou hast so mercifully and so many times preserved me from the great dangers to which my life was exposed; and from temptations which would have been too hard for me, if thy grace had not prevented them, and kept me from falling into them: this, O Lord, I acknowledge as one of the great blessings of my life, for which I desire continually to magnify thy great and glorious name.

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I bless thee, likewise, O Lord, for that measure of health which I have enjoyed, and for my recovery from a great and dangerous sickness; for any happy endowments of mind; for that degree of understanding which thou hast given me; and for preserving it to me, when my dear mother, for so many years of her life, lost the use and enjoyment of it, and might have derived that unhappiness to me her child, if thy merciful goodness had not prevented it. Forgive me, O Lord, that I have made no better use of the faculties which thou hast endowed me withal, for thy glory, and the benefit and advantage of others.

Blessed be thy name, likewise, that thou hast any time of my life, and in any measure, rendered me useful to any good purpose. I acknowledge it to be all from thee; and I desire to return the praise of all to thee, my great and constant Benefactor.

Blessed be God for the favour thou hast given me with men both of low and high condition; and the friends which thou hast raised up for me, to preserve me from the malice of mine enemies, and those who hate me without a cause, and not for any fault of mine towards them. O Lord, thou knowest.

More especially I bless thee, for that great and undeserved favour which I have found in the eyes of our excellent King and Queen. Give me, O Lord, the heart, and, if it be thy will, the opportunity to serve them in some measure to answer their favours to me, and the good opinion they have conceived of me, by rendering me useful and instrumental for the public good of this distracted kingdom and church, in endeavouring to heal and reconcile our unhappy differences, and to reform the disorders that are in

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thy church, and the lives and manners both of the ministers and people.

Finally, I bless thee for all the favours and blessings of my life both spiritual and temporal, so plentifully bestowed upon me; and above all, for a sincere desire to serve and please thee, my most gracious and merciful God, and to do good to men made after thine image.

Accept, O Lord, this my hearty sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which I offer up to thy Divine Majesty, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen, Amen.—

Next I made this humble and penitent confession of my sins, and earnest supplication for the pardon and forgiveness of them:

I bow myself before thee, most holy and gracious Lord God, in a deep sense of mine own vileness and sinfulness, which render me altogether unworthy of the least of those many favours and blessings wherewith thou hast been pleased to follow me all the days of my life. I am a sinful man, O Lord, and not worthy to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God. My whole life hath been little else but a continued course of disobedience, of unthankfulness, and unworthy returns to thee for all thy benefits. I have gone astray from the womb, and have grievously transgressed thy holy laws and commandments, in thought, word, and deed.

I desire now to confess my sins to thee, and with great shame and contrition to bewail and lament them in thy presence. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" so that "if thou be strict to mark iniquity, O Lord, who can stand?

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Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

I confess the folly of my childhood, and the great sins and vanities of my youth, and the many great provocations, which, in the course of my life, I have been often, too often guilty of; the impurities of my heart, and the many evil actions of my life, which thou, O Lord, knowest altogether; and for which I desire to take shame to myself, and to be confounded before thee at the remembrance of them. Lord, they are all in thy sight, and the most secret sins of my life in the light of thy countenance. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God.

I confess likewise before thee, that I have most grievously omitted and neglected my duty to thee, in not making better use of the talents and opportunities of doing good, which thou hast entrusted me withal. I have offended grievously, and been wanting to my duty in a great part of my life; towards those whom thou hast committed to my charge, in not instructing them, and watching over them as I ought, to inform them in the good knowledge of God; and to improve in other knowledge, as was my duty to have done. Lord, forgive this great and heinous sin.

I have offended against thee by anger and impatience upon many occasions; by neglecting to cultivate my mind, and to govern my passions; by uncharitableness and evil speaking; and especially by mispending my precious time, which might have been employed to excellent purposes. Lord, what can I say unto thee for these and innumerable other provocations of my life? "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Lord, let thy goodness, which I have had such plentiful ex-

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perience of, lead me to repentance not to be repented of.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions, for thy mercy in Jesus Christ, whom thou hast set forth to be propitious by his blood for the sins of the whole world.

I do now, O Lord, in a deep sense of my sinfulness, and a hearty contrition for all my faults of omission and commission which I have been guilty of, humble myself before thee, and earnestly implore thy mercy and forgiveness. I do not only repent of all the evils of my past life, but am now fully resolved by thy grace utterly to forsake them, and break off the practice of them; and do most heartily beg the assistance of thy grace to make good this holy resolution for the remaining part of my life. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;" and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of my heart, to make good what I have now so solemnly promised to thee; suffer me not to return again to sin and folly; but let thy grace continually preserve me, and enable me to do better; and "let not sin have any more dominion over me, that I should serve it in the lust of it."

Grant this, O merciful Father, for the sake of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," and now sitteth at thy right hand to make intercession for sinners: in his name and mediation I offer up this act of repentance, and these my humble supplications for pardon and forgiveness, for thy grace and assistance, concluding all in his comprehensive prayer: "Our Father," &c.—

Next, a prayer for God's blessing upon me, and

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his; and his Holy Spirit to be conferred upon me in the solemn dedication of me the day following to this high and holy office:

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, "the giver of every good and perfect gift," and "the Father of lights," who hast promised, that "if any man lack wisdom," he shall "ask it of thee, who givest to all liberally, and upbraidest not, and it shall be given him;" I most humbly beseech thee in the solemn action of the day following, wherein I thy servant am to be dedicated and set apart to the service of thee, and thy church, in so high and holy an office, to shed forth upon me, thy most unworthy servant, the gifts and graces of thy Holy Spirit in a plentiful measure.

And since, by thine own wise and good providence, and the importunate desire of those whom thou hast set in authority over us, I am called to the government and conduct of this miserably distracted and divided church, in so very difficult and dangerous a time, be pleased, of thine infinite mercy and goodness to thy sinful and most unworthy servant, to afford him the grace and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to enable him so to discharge the office which thou hast called him to, that thy name may be glorified, and this church, which thou hast committed to his charge, may be edified in faith and holiness, in love, peace, and union, by his diligent and faithful care and endeavours; grant to him such a degree of health, such a vigour of mind, and such a measure of heavenly grace and wisdom, as may fit him to be an useful pastor of thy church. Give me, O Lord, a mind after thine own heart, that I may delight to do thy will, O my God, and let thy law be written in my heart. Give me courage and

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resolution to do my duty, and a heart to spend myself, and to be spent in thy service, and in doing all the good that possibly I can the few remaining days of my pilgrimage here on earth.

I have had great experience of thy great mercy and goodness to help me all my days; "Hide not thy face from me in this needful time. Thou hast been my help; leave me not, nor forsake me, O God of my salvation; teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. In thee, O Lord, do I hope; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God; hear me, lest otherwise mine enemies should rejoice over me, and when my foot slippeth, they should magnify themselves against me. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hands of unrighteous and cruel men: for thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou hast been my trust from my youth, by thee have I been holden up from the womb; my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not, when my strength faileth. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works: now also when I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to them that are to come." Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.—

Psal. xxvii. 9. 11; xxxviii. 15, 16.

Then I read the prayers in the consecration-office. I concluded with a prayer for the King and Queen, and a short ejaculation:

O Lord and heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only ruler of

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princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, most heartily I beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious sovereign lord and lady, King William and Queen Mary; endue them with all those graces and virtues which may fit them for that high station wherein thou hast placed them; give them wisdom and understanding to go in and out before this great people, and a heart to seek their good all the days of their lives: and make them great examples of piety and virtue to an evil and degenerate age. Preserve them in their persons, govern their counsels, and prosper their forces by sea and land, and make them victorious over their enemies. Be pleased to take the person of the King into thy particular providence. "Give thy angels charge over him to keep him in all his ways; cover his head in the day of battle," and crown him with victory and good success. Give courage and resolution to him, and to his armies and fleets, and take away the hearts of his enemies. "Scatter the people that delight in war; shew thyself, thou Judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud." Let not iniquity always triumph in the oppression of thy people. "Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but do thou establish the just."

I beseech thee to bless and strengthen the Queen, to whom thou hast now committed the care and government of these nations. Give her wisdom and resolution for such a time as this. Discover and defeat all the designs of wicked and unreasonable men against the persons of their Majesties, and against our peace and religion, and "turn their counsels into foolishness." Strike through the loins of those that rise up against that happy government which thy signal

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providence hath established among us. O Lord, bless them both (if it be thy blessed will) with a hopeful issue to sit upon the throne after them, and to be a blessing to these nations for many generations. This, O Lord, is not impossible with thee. Have a gracious regard, I beseech thee, to the humble condition of the Queen thy servant, and make "her that was barren to sing, and to become a joyful mother of children." Hear my prayer, O Lord, in this behalf, for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ. Amen.

And now, O Lord, I humbly beseech thee to accept of these my praises and thanksgivings, which I have humbly offered to thy Divine Majesty, of my humiliation and repentance for all the sins of my life, and of my resolution of a better obedience for the future, and to enable me by thy grace to make them good. Hear likewise my prayers and supplications for thy blessing upon the solemn action of the day following, and upon thine unworthy servant who is to be dedicated to thy service; and for them whom thou hast set over us: and for these sinful nations; and all for the sake of "thy dearly beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased, even Jesus Christ the righteous:"

In whose name and words I conclude my prayers: "Our Father," &c.

A Discourse to his Servants, concerning receiving the Sacrament.

Now that I have mentioned the sacrament, I have a great desire, that as many of you as can should receive it at Easter, and that you should carefully

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prepare yourselves for it against that time. It is the most solemn institution of our religion, and as we are Christians, we are obliged to the frequent receiving of it, and we cannot neglect it without a great contempt of our blessed Saviour and his religion. He hath appointed it for a solemn remembrance of his great love to us, in laying down his life for us, and therefore he commands us to do it in remembrance of him; and St. Paul tells us, that "as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."

Both the comfort and the benefit of it are great. The comfort of it; because it does not only represent to us the exceeding love of our Saviour, in giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for us; but it likewise seals to us all those blessings and benefits which are purchased and procured for us by his death and passion; the pardon of sins; and power against sin.

The benefit of it is also great; because hereby we are confirmed in goodness, and our resolutions of better obedience are strengthened; and the grace of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do his will is hereby conveyed to us.

And the best preparation for it is by a sincere repentance for all our sins and miscarriages, which we remember ourselves to be at any time guilty of: by daily prayer to God that he would give us a sincere repentance for all our sins, and mercifully forgive them to us; and by a sincere and firm resolution to forsake our sins, and to do better for the future; to be more careful of all our actions, and more constant in prayer to God for his grace to enable us to keep his commandments, by being in charity with all men; and by forgiving those who have injured

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us by word or deed, as we hope for forgiveness from God.

And let none of us say, that we are not fitted and prepared for it. It is our duty to be so: and if we be not prepared to receive the sacrament, we are not qualified for the mercy of God, and for his forgiveness; we are not prepared for the happiness of heaven, and can have no hopes to come thither; but if we prepare ourselves as well as we can by repentance, and resolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earnestly to God for his grace, he will accept of this preparation, and will give us the comfort of this holy sacrament.

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A

FORM OF PRAYERS,

USED BY HIS LATE MAJESTY KING WILLIAM III. WHEN HE RECEIVED THE HOLY SACRAMENT, AND ON OTHER OCCASIONS.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."—JOHN ix. 4.

"Whatsoever ye do in words, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."—COLOS. iii. 17.

A Prayer to God, that he would be pleased to assist and accept my Preparation to receive the blessed Sacrament.

I PROSTRATE myself before thee, my most gracious God and merciful Father, in an humble acknowledgment of my unworthiness and insufficiency of myself, for any thing that is good. I am sensible that without thee I can do nothing; and therefore do humbly implore thy gracious assistance, and acceptance of my endeavour to prepare myself for the worthy receiving of the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of thy dear Son.

Stir up, I beseech thee, such pious affections and dispositions in my soul, and fill my mind with such holy meditations, as are suitable to this occasion. Grant me such a sense of my sins, and of the sufferings of my blessed Saviour for them, as may affect my heart with a deep sorrow for my sins, and

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an eternal hatred and displeasure against them, and may effectually engage me to love and live to him who died for me, Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

A penitent Confession of Sins, with an humble supplication for mercy and forgiveness.

Most gracious and merciful God, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, I desire to humble my soul before thee, in a deep sense of my own vileness and unworthiness, by reason of the many sins and provocations which I have been guilty of against thy Divine Majesty; by thought, word, and deed. Forgive, O Lord, all the sins and follies of my life, which have been many and great; and which I do now with shame and sorrow confess and bewail before thee, for thy mercies' sake in Jesus Christ. Pardon, O my God, my manifold neglects and omissions, and slight and careless performance of the duties of religion, without due affection and attention of mind; that I have not served thee with that purity of intention, with that sincerity of heart, with that fervency of spirit, with that zeal for thy glory, with that care, and diligence, and constancy, that I ought.

Forgive, O Lord, my sins of ignorance and infirmity, which are more than can be numbered; but especially all my wilful transgressions of thy holy and righteous laws, the impurity of my heart and thoughts, all irregular appetites and passions, and every sinful and wicked practice, of what nature or kind soever. More particularly, I do, with great shame and confusion of face, confess and lament before thee, from whom nothing is hid, that I have

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grievously offended. *These my transgressions, with many more, which I cannot remember and reckon up before thee, are all in thy sight, O Lord, and my most secret sins in the light of thy countenance. When I look back upon the errors and miscarriages of my past life, and consider with myself what I have done, and what I deserve at thy hands, my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God. Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

* Here he was used to mention particulars.

Make me deeply sensible of the great evil of my sins, and work in me a hearty contrition for them; and let the sense of them be more grievous to me than of any other evil whatsoever. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and according to thy tender mercies forgive all my transgressions, for the sake of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

A Prayer for the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to enable me to resolve and to do better for the future.

And now, O Lord, in confidence of thy great mercy and goodness to all that are truly penitent, and sincerely resolve to do better, I most humbly implore the grace and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to enable me to become every day better, and to reform whatever has been amiss in the temper and disposition of my mind, or in any of the actions of my life. Grant me the wisdom and understanding to know my duty, and the heart and will to do it. Vouchsafe to me the continual presence and direction, the assist-

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ance and comforts, of thy Holy Spirit; whereby I may be disposed and enabled to do thy will with delight and cheerfulness, and with patience and contentedness to submit to it in all things. Endue me, O Lord, with the true fear and love of thee, and with a prudent zeal for thy glory. Increase in me more and more the graces of charity and meekness, of truth, and justice, and fidelity; give me humility and patience, and a firmness of spirit to bear every condition with constancy and equality of mind.

Enable me, O Lord, by thy grace, to govern all my appetites, and every inordinate lust and passion, by temperance and purity, and meekness of wisdom; setting thee always before me, that I may not sin against thee. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; purify my soul from all evil thoughts and inclinations, from all bad intentions and designs. Deliver me, O Lord, from pride and vanity, from immoderate self-love, and obstinate self-will, and from all malice, and envy, and ill-will, towards any.

Make me to love thee as I ought, above all things; and let the interest of thy honour and glory be ever dearer to me than my own will or reputation, or any temporal advantage whatsoever.

Subdue in me the evil spirit of wrath and revenge, and dispose my heart patiently to bear reproaches and wrongs, and to be ready not only to forgive, but to return good for evil.

Assist me, O Lord, more especially in the faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of that high station in which thou hast placed me: and grant that I may employ all that power and authority which thou hast invested me with, for thy glory and the public good; that I may rule over men in thy

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fear, with justice and equity, ever studying and endeavouring the good of the people committed to my charge, and as much as in me lies, the peace and prosperity, the welfare and happiness, of mankind.

Confirm me, O my God, in all these holy resolutions; and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose of my heart, to perform them to the utmost of my power: all which I humbly beg for thy mercies' sake in Jesus Christ. Amen.

An humble Intercession with God for all mankind; for the whole Christian church, and more particularly for that part of it which is planted in these kingdoms; for the Queen, and for all under our government; for my relations and friends; for my native country, and for my allies, &c.

I THINE unworthy servant desire likewise humbly to intercede with thee, the God and Father of all, for all mankind; that thou wouldest be pleased to have compassion upon their blindness and ignorance, their gross errors and their wicked practices. Send forth, I beseech thee, thy light and thy truth, to scatter that thick darkness which covers the nations, and overspreads so great a part of the world; that thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations.

Bless and preserve thy church dispersed over the face of the earth, restore to it unity and concord, in the acknowledgment of the truth, and the practice of righteousness and goodness. Remove out of it all errors and corruptions, all offences and scandals, all divisions and dissensions, all tyranny and usurpation over the minds and consciences of men, that they who profess the same faith, may no longer perse-

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cute and destroy one another, but may be kind and tender-hearted one towards another, as it becomes brethren, and those that are heirs of the same common salvation.

I beseech thee more especially, to be merciful to that part of thy church, which thou hast planted in these kingdoms. Pity the distractions, and heal the breaches of it. Purge out of it all impiety and profaneness. Take away those mistakes, and mutual exasperations, which cause so much distemper and disturbance; and restore to it piety and virtue, peace and charity. Endue the pastors and governors of it with the spirit of true religion and goodness, and make them zealous and diligent to promote it in those who are under their instruction and care. Give them wisdom to discern the best and most proper means of composing the differences of this miserably divided church, the heart to endeavour it, and by thy blessing upon their endeavours the happiness to effect it.

And I beseech thee, O Lord, of thy great goodness, to bless all my relations and friends; particularly my dearest consort, the Queen. I acknowledge thy special providence in bringing us together, and thereby giving me the opportunity and means of being instrumental in rescuing these nations from misery and ruin. And as thou hast been pleased to unite us in the nearest relation; so I beseech thee to preserve and continue that entire love and affection between us, which becomes that relation. And if it be thy blessed will, and thou seest it best for us, bless us with children, to sit upon the throne of these kingdoms, and to be a blessing to them for many generations.

Be merciful, also, O God, to my native country;

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let true religion and righteousness be established among them, as the surest foundation of their peace and prosperity.

Bless all my allies: O righteous Lord, that lovest righteousness, and hatest falsehood and wrong, do thou stand by us in the maintenance of that just cause in which we are engaged; and bless us with union and good success.

And in thy good time, O Lord, restore peace to Christendom; put an end to those bloody wars and desolations, wherewith it hath been so long and so miserably harassed: and, when thou seest it best and fittest, manifest thy glorious justice in giving check to that ambition and cruelty, which hath been the cause of so great calamities, to so great a part of the world. "O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself; lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud: scatter the people that delight in war: let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but do thou establish the just."

Be merciful, O God, to all that are in affliction or distress, that labour under poverty, or persecution, or captivity: under bodily pains and diseases, or under temptation and trouble of mind: be pleased to support and comfort them, and in thy due time to deliver them according to thy great mercy.

Forgive, I beseech thee, most merciful Father, to all mine enemies, all their malice and ill-will towards me: and give them repentance and better minds: which I heartily beg of thee for them, as I myself hope for mercy and forgiveness at thy hands, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, my most merciful God and Saviour.

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A thankful Acknowledgment of the mercies of God both temporal and spiritual; and above all for the redemption of mankind by the humiliation and sufferings of his Son in our nature.

BLESSED and glorious Lord God, the great Creator, and Preserver, and Governor of all things; my Saviour and deliverer, and continual benefactor; I acknowledge, I admire, I adore thy infinite excellences and perfections: and let all the creatures in heaven and earth say, Amen.

I RENDER thanks to thee, most gracious God, for innumerable favours conferred upon me thy poor creature, and most unworthy; for my being, for my reason, and for all other endowments and faculties of soul and body; for thy continual care and watchful providence over me from the beginning of my life, and through the whole course of it: for all the happy circumstances of my birth and education: for the pious care of my dear and ever-honoured mother, and grandmother, and of all others who had the charge of me in my tender years: for thy unwearied patience towards me, after so many and so great provocations: and for thy merciful and wonderful preservation of me from innumerable dangers and deaths, to which I have been exposed all my life. I will still hope in thy goodness, O Lord, who hast been my trust from my youth; by thee have I been holden up from the womb, my praise shall be continually of thee. Above all I adore thy tender mercy and compassion to me and all mankind, in sending thy only Son into the world to redeem us from sin and misery, and by suffering in our nature, and dying in our stead, to purchase for us eternal

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life. I bless thee for the light of the glorious gospel, for the knowledge and sense of my duty towards thee; for delivering me from temptations too hard for me, and supporting me under many: for the direction, and assistance, and comforts of thy Holy Spirit: for restraining me by thy grace, and reclaiming me from the ways of sin and vanity; and for all the gracious communications of thy goodness, whereby thou hast inclined my heart to love and fear thee, and enabled me in any measure to do thy will.

For these and all other thy blessings and favours to me, which are more than can be numbered, I render unto thee, most gracious God, all possible praise and thanks by Jesus Christ, my blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

A Prayer to God, to prepare my heart for the worthy receiving of the Holy Sacrament, and to make me partaker of the blessings and benefits of it.

I COME to thee, O my Lord God, from whom are the preparation of the heart and the good disposition of our minds for thy worship and service. Fit me, O Lord, by hearty contrition for my sins, and a sincere resolution of a better course, to approach thy altar. Accept of the expiation which thy Son hath made of all my transgressions by the sacrifice of himself, as of a lamb without spot and blemish. Let the remembrance of my sins, and of his bitter sufferings for them, pierce my very heart, and engage me for ever to love and serve him, who laid down his life for me. Cleanse me, O Lord, from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that I may be a meet guest for thy holy table, and a real partaker of those

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blessings and benefits which are represented in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Strengthen, O God, all good resolutions in me; enable me, by thy grace, faithfully to perform the conditions of that covenant which I made in baptism, and intend to renew in the holy sacrament, by dedicating myself entirely and for ever to the service of my blessed Redeemer, who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood. To him be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, love and obedience, for ever and ever. Amen.

Short Meditations and Ejaculations at the Communion.

Before the minister begins the service.

I LIFT up my soul to thee, my God, humbly imploring thy blessing upon me, and gracious assistance of me, in the holy action I am now about. Forgive my want of due preparation, and accept of my sincere desire to perform an acceptable service to thee, through Jesus Christ.

Before the receiving of the bread.

LORD, I am not worthy of the crumbs which fall from thy table.

After the receiving of it.

GREATER love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.

Herein hath God commended his love to us, that whilst we were enemies, he gave his Son to die for us.

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Before the receiving of the cup.

WHAT shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will bless the name of the Lord.

After the receiving of it.

BLESSED be God for his unspeakable gift, his dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

After the conclusion of the whole action.

BLESS the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases! who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies! who satisfieth thy mouth with good things! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

A Prayer to be used in private afterwards.

I praise and magnify thy great and glorious name, O Lord my God, for the blessed opportunity afforded to me this day, of commemorating thy infinite goodness and mercy to me and all mankind, in sending thy only Son into the world to take our nature upon him, to submit to the infirmities and miseries of it, to live amongst us, and to die for us: and to preserve the memory of this great love and goodness of thine to us for ever in our hearts, that thou hast been pleased to appoint the blessed sacrament, for a solemn remembrance of it. Grant, O Lord, that I may faithfully keep and perform that holy covenant

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which I have this day so solemnly renewed and confirmed in thy presence, and at thy table. Let it be an eternal obligation upon me of perpetual love and obedience to thee. Let nothing seem hard for me to do, or grievous for me to suffer, for thy sake, who, whilst I was a sinner, and an enemy to thee, lovedst me at such a rate as never any man did his friend.

Grant that by this sacrament there may be conveyed to my soul new spiritual life and strength, and such a measure of thy grace and assistance, as may enable me to a greater care of my duty for the future; that I may henceforth live as becomes the redeemed of the Lord; even to him who died for my sins, and rose again for my justification, and is now sat down on the right hand of the throne of God, to make intercession for me: in his holy name and words I conclude my imperfect prayers:

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

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THE

RULE OF FAITH,

OR,

AN ANSWER

TO THE

TREATISE OF Mr. J. S.

ENTITLED

SURE-FOOTING, &c.

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TO MY

HONOURED AND LEARNED FRIEND,

DR. STILLINGFLEET.

SIR,

I HAVE, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, read over your book, which I find in every part answerable to its title, viz. "A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion." And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a public benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a discourse entitled, "Surefooting in Christianity." And although I have no small prejudice against books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain animadversions on some passages in your book, which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which animadversions, I found that the author of them had attacked (and, in his own opinion, confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main discourses: which, because they are in great vogue among some of his own party, and do, with an unusual kind of confidence and ostentation, pretend to the newest and most exact fashion of writing controversy, as being all along demonstrative, and built upon self-evident principles: therefore, I resolved thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover (if I could) upon what so firm and solid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.

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But before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter from the author of "Sure-footing" to his answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his answer. In which letter, though there be many things liable to great exception, yet, because I am unwilling to be diverted from the main question, I shall not argue with him about any of those matters; only take leave to use the same liberty in managing my answer, which he hath assumed to himself in prescribing laws to me about it: therefore, without taking any further notice of his letter, I address myself to his book.

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THE

RULE OF FAITH.

PART I.

The Explication and State of the Question.

SECT. I.

The explication of the terms of the question.

§. 1. THE question he propounds to himself to debate, is, "What is the rule of faith?" In order to the resolution whereof he endeavours,

First, To fix the true notion of these two terms, rule and faith: which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable, but I can by no means think his explication of those terms to be sufficient. He tells us, that "a rule is that which is able to regulate or guide him that useth it:" in which description, as in many other passages of his book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. *Whitby, that is, the confounding of a rule and a guide, by making regulating and guiding to be equivalent words. But for this I am no further concerned than to take notice of it by the way: the fault which I find in this definition, is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Englishmen what a rule is, and for their clearer understanding of this

* P. 180.

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word, he explains it by a word less removed from the Latin, "a rule is that which is able to regulate him that useth it;" just as if a man should go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by saying, He is one that hath the power of legislation. Of the two he had much better have said, that a rule is a thing that is able to rule him that useth it, though this be nothing but an explication of the same word by itself.

§. 2. Not much better is his explication of the term faith, which he tells us, "in the common sense of mankind, is the same with believing." *He declared indeed beforehand, that he did not "intend to give rigorous school-definitions of either this or the former word;" and (to do him right) he hath not in the least swerved from his intention. It were to be wished he had prefaced some such thing to his demonstrations, for the reader will find that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions; the latter of which doth very much resemble the countryman's way of defining, who, being asked by his neighbour, what an invasion was, after some study told him very gravely, that "an invasion was as if he should say an invasion." In like manner Mr. S. tells us, that "faith (or, which is all one, belief) is the same with believing;" which, in my apprehension, is but a country definition, unless the interposing of those solemn words "in the common sense of mankind" may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. says in his †"Transition" (as he calls it) where he gives the reader an account what feats he hath done in his book: "He will see (says he) I take my rise at the meaning of the words rule and

* P. 4.

† P. 159.

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faith; this known, I establish my first principles in this present matter to be these, viz. a rule is a rule, faith is faith." This is the right self-evident method he talks so much of, and his principles agree admirably well with his definitions. If he had but proceeded in the same method, and added, that a rule of faith is a rule of faith, that oral tradition is oral tradition; and that to say, oral tradition is the rule of faith, is as much as to say oral tradition is the rule of faith, the whole business had been concluded without any more ado, and I think nobody would have gone about to confute him.

§. 3. Rejecting then his way of definition as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things; I shall endeavour to explain a little better (if I can) the meaning of these terms.

A rule (when we speak of a rule of faith) is a metaphorical word, which, in its first and proper sense, being applied to material and sensible things, is the measure according to which we judge of the straightness and crookedness of things; and from hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral or intellectual. A moral rule is the measure according to which we judge whether a thing be good or evil; and this kind of rule is that which is commonly called a law, and the agreement or disagreement of our actions to this rule, is, suitably to the metaphor, called rectitude or obliquity. An intellectual rule is the measure according to which we judge whether a thing be true or false; and this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reason, are that general rule, according to which we judge whether a thing be true or false. The particular principles

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of every science are the more particular rules, according to which we judge whether things in that science be true or false. So that the general notion of a rule is, That it is a measure, by the agreement or disagreement to which we judge of all things of that kind to which it belongs.

§. 4. Faith, though both among sacred and profane writers it be used many times more generally for a persuasion or assent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art used by divines, it signifies that particular kind of assent which is wrought in us by testimony or authority: so that Divine faith, which we are now speaking of, is an assent to a thing upon the testimony or authority of God; or, which is all one, an assent to a truth upon Divine revelation.

§. 5. A rule of faith is the measure according to which we judge what matters we are to assent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And more particularly, the rule of Christian faith is the measure, according to which we are to judge what we ought to assent to as the doctrine revealed by Christ to the world, and what not.

§. 6. So that this question, What is the rule of Christian faith? supposeth a doctrine revealed by Christ to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by Christ to his apostles, and sufficient confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in the same manner published to the world by the apostles, who likewise gave sufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is necessarily supposed in the question: for it would be in vain to inquire whether this or that be the rule of Christian faith, if such a thing as the Christian faith were not first supposed. When therefore

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we inquire, What is the rule of Christian faith? the meaning of that inquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of Christ's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the distance of so many ages from the time of its first delivery: for this being known, we have the rule of faith; that is, a measure by which we may judge what we are to assent to, as the doctrine of Christ, and what not. So that when any question ariseth about any particular proposition, whether this be part of Christ's doctrine, we may be able, by this rule, to resolve it.

SECT. II.

Mr. S.'s rule of faith.

§. 1. THE next thing to be considered is, his resolution of this question; by which we shall know what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; for that being known, the controversy between us will easily be stated.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition (in opposition to writing, or any other way that can be assigned) is the rule of faith. By oral or practical tradition, he means* "a delivery down from hand to hand (by words, and a constant course of frequent and visible actions, conformable to those words) of the sense and faith of forefathers."

* P. 41.

§. 2. Now, that I may bring the controversy between us to a clear state, I am first to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that so I may the better understand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the Scriptures, or written tradition. And then I am to lay down the protestant rule of faith, that so it

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may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The sum of what he attributes to oral tradition, so far as can be collected out of so obscure and confused a discourse, may be reduced to these five heads:

§. 3. First, That the doctrine of Christian religion was delivered by Christ to the apostles, and by them published to the world; and that the age which first received it from the apostles, delivered it as they received it, without any change or corruption to their children, and they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this way of oral tradition. This is the sum of his explication of tradition, Disc. 5th.

§. 4. Secondly, That this way alone is not only sufficient to convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only possible way that can be imagined of conveying down a doctrine securely from one age to another. And this is the natural result of his discourse about the properties of a rule of faith: for if the true properties of a rule of faith do belong to oral tradition, then it is a sufficient means; and if those properties do solely and essentially appertain to it, and are incompatible to any thing else, (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impossible there should be any other way.

§. 5. Thirdly, That it is impossible this means should fail or miss of its end; that is, the doctrine of Christ being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither cease to descend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its descent. This is that which his demonstrations pretend to prove.

§. 6. Fourthly, That the infallibility of oral tradition, or the impossibility of its failing, is a first and self-evident principle. This he frequently asserts throughout his book.

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§. 7. *Fifthly*, That this way of oral tradition hath *de facto* in all ages been acknowledged by Christians as the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the consent of authority.

§. 8. As for the Scriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inspired, and to contain a Divine doctrine, even the same which is delivered by oral tradition; so he tells us,* "it is certain the apostles taught the same doctrine they writ:" but then he denies it to be of any use without oral tradition, because neither the letter nor sense of it can without that be ascertained: so he saith in his Letter to Dr. Causabon:† "As for the Scriptures, (ascertaining their letter and sense, which is done by tradition) it is clear they are of incomparable value, not only for the Divine doctrine contained in them, but also for many particular passages, whose source or first attestation, not being universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition." Where, though he gives the Scriptures very good words, it is to be understood, provided they will be subordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their sense, and their being intelligible and useful, to oral tradition: for if any man shall presume to say, that this book hath any certain sense without oral tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath indited is so written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its sense and interpretation; then the most scurrilous language is not bad enough for the Scriptures: them, what are these

* P. 117.

† P. 337.

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sacred writings,* but "ink variously figured in a book,† unsensed characters, waxen-natured words, not yet sensed, nor having any certain interpreter, but fit to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit? that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing." These, with many other disgraceful terms, he very liberally bestows upon the Divine oracles; the consideration whereof, did it not minister too much horror, would afford some comfort; for, by this kind of rude usage so familiar with him towards his adversaries, one may reasonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the Scriptures among his friends.

* Append. 4th, p. 519.
† P. 68.

§. 9. And whereas he saith, that "the Scriptures have preserved many particular passages, which, because their source or first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition;" this is impossible according to his hypothesis; for if neither the Scripture letter, nor the certain sense of it as to the main body of Christian doctrine, could have been secured without oral tradition; that is, if we could not have known that those passages which contain the main points of Christ's doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inspired, or what the sense of them was, but from the consonancy and agreement of those passages with the doctrine which was orally preached by the apostles; how can we be certain either of the letter or sense of other particular passages which must necessarily want this confirmation from oral tradition, because "their first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical?" Nay, his discourse plainly implies that we can have no security at all, either of the letter or sense of any

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other parts of Scripture, but only those which are coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine; as is evident from these words:† "Tradition established, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to preserve a copy of the Scripture-letter truly significative of Christ's sense, as far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine preached at first;" because "sense writ in men's hearts by tradition, can easily guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter." This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at; they would correct the "outward letter of Scripture" by "sense written in their hearts;" and then, instead of leaving out the second commandment, they would change it into a precept of "giving due worship to images," according to the council of Trent; and a thousand other alterations they must make in the Bible, to make it truly significative of the sense of their church. But surely the outward letter of other passages of Scripture, which were not intended to signify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations: and yet the church is not by tradition provided of any way to correct these alterations when they happen; because tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furnish the church with a certain and infallible rule of preserving a copy of the Scripture-letter, so far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine.

* P. 116.

§. 10. Again he tells them,† "Tradition established, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to interpret Scripture-letter by, so as to arrive certainly at Christ's sense, as far as the letter concerns the body of Christian doctrine preached at first, or points re-

† P. 117.

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quisite to salvation." So that whatever he may attribute to Scripture for fashion's sake, and to "avoid calumny with the vulgar," as he says very ingeniously in his explication of the 15th corollary; nevertheless it is plain, that, according to his own hypothesis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That it is altogether useless according to his hypothesis is plain, for the main body of Christian doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of confirmation to it because it receives all its confirmation from it; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition and sense written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of Scripture which are not coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine, we can have no certainty that the outward letter is true, nor, if we could, can we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his hypothesis, is plain, because* "every silly and upstart heresy fathers itself upon it;" and when men leave tradition, (as he supposeth all heretics do) the Scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented, being to such persons only †"waxen-natured words, not sensed, nor having any certain interpreter, but fit to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit: that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing." And, indeed, if his hypothesis were true, the Scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and ‡Mr White's comparison of them with Lilly's almanack, would not only be pardonable but pro-

* P. 40.

† P. 68.

‡ Apology for Tradition, p. 165.

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per; and (unless he added it out of prudence, and for the people's sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those books) he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, that "it was agreeable rather to the impertinency of the objection than the dignity of the subject." Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to be borne by them and their church to the Scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the way: and even look upon it as a great oversight of the Divine Providence to trouble his church with a book, which, if their discourses be of any consequence, can stand catholics in no stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a weapon in the hands of heretics.

SECT. III.

The protestant doctrine concerning the rule of faith.

§. 1. HAVING thus taken a view of his opinion, and considered how much he attributes to oral tradition, and how little to the Scriptures; before I assail his hypothesis, I shall lay down the protestant rule of faith; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his book, but that he may have no colour of objection that I proceed altogether in the destructive way, and overthrow his principle, as he calls it, without substituting another in his room. The opinion then of the protestants concerning the rule of faith, is this, in general: That those books which we call the Holy Scriptures, are the means whereby the Christian doctrine hath been brought down to

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us. And that he may now clearly understand this, together with the grounds of it, (which in reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us) I shall declare more particularly in these following propositions.

§. 2. First, That the doctrine of Christian religion was by Christ delivered to the apostles, and by them first preached to the world, and afterwards by them committed to writing; which writings, or books, have been transmitted from one age to another down to us: so far I take to be granted by our present adversaries. That the Christian doctrine was by Christ delivered to the apostles, and by them published to the world, is part of their own hypothesis: that this doctrine was afterwards by the apostles committed to writing, he also grants, corol. 29.* "It is certain the apostles taught the same doctrine they writ;" and if so, it must be as certain that they writ the same doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general tenet of the papists, that the Scriptures do not contain the entire body of Christian doctrine, but that besides the doctrines contained in Scripture, there are also others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who supposeth the whole doctrine of Christian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the same doctrine is contained in the Scriptures; only he denies the Scriptures to be a means sufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assured what is Christ's doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that passage I last cited to grant this, in saying that the apostles did both teach and write the same

* P. 117.

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doctrine. I am sure Mr. White (whom he follows very closely through his whole book) does not deny this in his "Apology for Tradition,"* where he saith, that "it is not the catholic position, that all its doctrines are not contained in the Scriptures." And that those writings or books which we call the Holy Scriptures, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable matter of fact, and granted universally by the papists, as to all those books which are owned by protestants for canonical.

* P. 171.

§. 3. Secondly, That the way of writing is a sufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of those who live in times very remote from the age of its first delivery. According to his hypothesis, there is no possible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and security besides that of oral tradition; the falsehood of which will sufficiently appear, when I shall have shewn, that the true properties of a rule of faith do agree to the Scriptures, and not to oral tradition. In the mean time I shall only offer this to his consideration—that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the same words; and that a writing or book which is public, and in every one's hand, may be conveyed down with at least as much certainty and security, and with as little danger of alteration, as an oral tradition. And if so, I understand not what can render it impossible for a book to convey down a doctrine to the knowledge of after ages. Besides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended some little inconvenience in making that an essential part of his hypothesis, which is contradicted by plain and constant experience: for that any kind of doctrine may be sufficiently conveyed, by books,

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to the knowledge of after ages, provided those books be but written intelligibly, and preserved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I shall be so bold as to suppose possible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind as that there are books. And surely we Christians cannot think it impossible to convey a doctrine to posterity by books, when we consider that God himself pitched upon this way for conveyance of the doctrine of the Jewish religion to after ages; because it is not likely that so wise an agent should pitch upon a means whereby it was impossible he should attain his end.

§. 4. Thirdly, That the books of Scripture are sufficiently plain, as to all things necessary to be believed and practised. He that denies this, ought in reason to instance in some necessary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in some place of Scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a sufficient objection to say,* That the greatest wits among the protestants differ about the sense of those texts, wherein the generality of them suppose the divinity of Christ to be plainly and clearly expressed; because if nothing were to be accounted sufficiently plain, but what it is impossible a great wit should be able to wrest to any other sense, not only the Scriptures, but all other books, and (which is worst of all to him that makes this objection) all oral tradition, would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditionary church pretend that the doctrine of Christ's divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expressed in Scripture? I would fain know what plainer words she ever used to express this point of faith by, than what the Scripture useth,

* P. 38, 39.

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which expressly calls him "God, the true God, God over all, blessed for evermore." If it be said, that those who deny the divinity of Christ have been able to evade these and all other texts of Scripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is easily answered, that the same arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no reason why they should trouble themselves so much about the latter; for why should they be solicitous to wrest the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church's authority? If those great wits (as he calls them) had believed the sayings of Scripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of councils; they would have answered texts of Scripture, as they have done the definitions of councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another sense, but by downright denying their authority. So that it seems that oral tradition is liable to the same inconvenience with the written, as to this particular.

§. 5. And of this I shall give him a plain instance in two great wits of their church, the present pope and Mr. White; the one the head of the traditionary church, as Mr. S. calls it; the other the great master of the traditionary doctrine. These two great wits, the pope and Mr. White, notwithstanding the plainness of oral tradition, and the impossibility of being ignorant of it, or mistaking it, have yet been so unhappy as to differ about several points of faith; insomuch that Mr. White is unkindly censured for it at Rome, and perhaps here in England the pope speeds no better; however, the difference continues still so wide, that Mr. White hath thought fit to disobey the summons of his chief pastor, and, like a

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prudent man, rather to write against him here out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains, against a practical tradition, which they have at Rome, of killing heretics.

Methinks Mr. S. might have spared his brags, that he "hath evinced from clear reason,* that it is far more impossible to make a man not to be, than not to know what is riveted into his soul by so oft-repeated sensations (as the Christian faith is by oral and practical tradition); and that it exceeds all the power of nature (abstracting from the cases of madness and violent disease) to blot knowledge, thus fixed, out of the soul of one single believer;" insomuch, "that sooner may all mankind perish, than the regulative virtue of tradition miscarry; nay, sooner may the sinews of entire nature, by overstraining, crack, and she lose all her activity and motion, (that is, herself) than one single part of that innumerable multitude which integrate the vast testification, which we call tradition, can possibly be violated;" when, after he hath told us † that the city of Rome was blessed with "more vigorous causes to imprint Christ's doctrine at first, and recommend it to the next age, than were found any where else;" and consequently, "that the stream of tradition, in its source and first putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous there, than in any other see; and that the chief pastor of that see hath a particular title to infallibility built upon tradition, above any other pastor whatsoever; not to dilate on the particular assistances to that bishop, springing out of his divinely-constituted office:" when, I say, after all this quaint reasoning, and rumbling rhetoric, about the infalli-

* P. 54.

† P. 116.

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bility of oral tradition, and the particular infallibility of the bishop of Rome built on tradition, we cannot but remember that this great oracle of oral tradition, the pope, and this great master of it, Mr. White, who is so peculiarly skilled in the rule of faith, have so manifestly declared themselves to differ in points of faith. For that the pope, and his congregation general, at Rome, have condemned all his books for this reason, because † "they contain several propositions manifestly heretical," is a sign that these two great wits do not very well hit it in matters of faith; and either that they do not both agree in the same rule of faith, or that one of them does not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says concerning the use of Scripture, be upon this account justly applied to the business of oral tradition? † If we see two such eminent wits among the papists (the pope and Mr. White) making use of the self-same, and, as they conceive, the best advantages their rule of faith gives them; and availing themselves the best they can by acquired skill, yet differ about matters of faith; what certainty can we undertakingly promise to weaker heads, that is, to the generality of the papists, in whom the governors of the church do professedly cherish ignorance, for the increasing of their devotion?

† Mr. Wh. Exetasis, p. 9.

† P. 39.

§. 6. Fourthly, We have sufficient assurance that the books of Scripture are conveyed down to us without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this, must either reject the authority of all books, because we cannot be certain whether they be the same now that they were at first; or else, give some probable reason why these should be more

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liable to corruption than others. But any man that considers things, will easily find, that it is much more improbable that these books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any thing material to faith or a good life, than any other books in the world; whether we consider the peculiar providence of God engaged for the preservation of them, or the peculiar circumstances of these books. If they were written by men divinely inspired, and are of use to Christians, as is acknowledged (at least in words) on all hands, nothing is more credible, than that the same Divine Providence which took care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And, if we consider the peculiar circumstances of these books, we shall find it morally impossible that they should have been materially corrupted, because, being of universal and mighty concernment, and at first diffused into many hands, and soon after translated into most languages, and most passages in them cited in books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great assurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not suffered any material alteration, and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition, as I shall shew, when I come to answer the thing which he calls demonstration.

§. 7. Fifthly, That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Christians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Christ hath with greatest certainty been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adversaries of Christian religion did always look upon the Scripture as the standard and measure of the Christ-

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ian doctrine, and in all their writings against Christianity, took that for granted to be the Christian faith which was contained in these books; there having not as yet any philosopher risen up who had demonstrated to the world, that a doctrine could not, with sufficient certainty and clearness, be conveyed by writing, from one age to another. But how absurd had this method of confuting Christian religion been, if it had been then the public profession of Christians, that the Scriptures were not the rule of their faith? How easy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for, and defended Christian religion, to have told them, they took a wrong measure of their doctrine; for it was not the principle of Christians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to inquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to son, without which the Scriptures could signify no more to them than an unknown cipher without a key; being of themselves, without the light of oral tradition, only a heap of unintelligible words, "unsensed characters, and ink variously figured in a book;" and, therefore, it was a gross mistake in them to think they could understand the Christian religion (like their own philosophy) by reading of those books, or confute it by impugning them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay, they ought in all reason to have taken this course, and to have appealed from those dead senseless books to the "true rule of faith, the living voice of the church essential." But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpose in the apologies of the fathers? If he hath discovered any such matter, he

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might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiser; in the mean time, I shall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except against that method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous reports and misrepresentations which were made of their doctrine, to the books of Scripture, as the true standard of it.

§. 8. Another evidence that Christians in all ages since the apostles' times, have owned the Scriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did use constantly to declare to the people, what they were to believe, and what they were to practise, out of the Scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed not the Scriptures, but something else, to have been the rule of faith and manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the people from Mr. S.'s supposed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the doctrines of the Christian faith from the Scriptures? Had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S.'s way, they would not have built their doctrine upon Scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a book, but rather, as their more prudent posterity have done, would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholesome traditions, and instead of telling them, as they do most frequently, "Thus saith the Scripture," would only have told them, This is "the voice of the essential church, thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us from our forefathers."

§. 9. I might add, for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and persecutors of Christianity

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against this book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of Christians, and destroy it out of the world, that, by this means, they might extirpate Christianity: for it seems they thought that the abolishing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But, according to Mr. S.'s opinion, their malice wanted wit; for had all the Bibles in the world been burned, Christian religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserved, and safely transmitted down to us, "by sense written in men's hearts," with the good help of Mr. S.'s demonstration. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it; for this occasion and parent of all heresy, the Scripture, being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands, and by leading the people in the safe paths of tradition, and consequently of science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well, but suppose the persecutors of Christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the Christians in those days to be so tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? And why did they look upon those who, out of fear, delivered up their books, as apostates and renouncers of Christianity? And if they had not thought this book to be the great instrument of their faith and salvation, and if it had really been of no greater consideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it; why should they be so loath to part with a few "unsensed characters, waxen-natured words, fit to be played upon diversely by quirks of wit, that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing?" Why should they value their lives at so cheap a rate, as to throw them away for a few insignificant scrawls, and to shed their

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blood for "a little ink variously figured in a book?" Did they not know, that the safety of Christianity did not depend upon this book? Did no Christian then understand that, which (according to Mr. S.) no Christian can be ignorant of, viz. that not the Scripture, "but unmistakable and indefectible oral tradition" was the rule of faith? Why did they not consider, that though this letter-rule of heretics had been consumed to ashes, yet their faith would have lain safe, and "been preserved entire" in its "spiritual causes, men's minds, the noblest pieces in nature?" Some of them, indeed, did deliver up their books, and were called Traditores; and I have some ground to believe, that these were the only traditionary Christians of that time, and that the rest were confessors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if this be not evidence enough, that the Scriptures have always been acknowledged by Christians for the rule of faith, I shall, when I come to examine his testimonies for tradition, (with the good leave of his distinction between speculators and testifiers) prove, by most express testimony, that it was the general opinion of the fathers, that the Scriptures are the rule of Christian faith; and then, if his demonstration of the infallibility of tradition will enforce, that as testifiers they must needs have spoken otherwise, who can help it?

* P. 34.

SECT. IV.

§. 1. HAVING thus laid down the protestant rule of faith, with the grounds of it, all that now remains for me to do to-

How much protestants allow to oral tradition.

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wards the clear and full stating of the controversy between us, is to take notice briefly, and with due limitations,

First, How much the protestants do allow to oral tradition.

Secondly, What those things are which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his rule of faith, which we see no cause to attribute to ours: and when this is done, any one may easily discern how far we differ.

§. 2. First, How much protestants do allow to oral tradition.

1. We grant that oral tradition, in some circumstances, may be a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but withal we deny, that such circumstances are now in being. In the first ages of the world, when the *credenda*, or articles of religion, and the *agenda*, or precepts of it, were but few, and such as had the evidence of natural light; when the world was contracted into a few families in comparison, and the age of men ordinarily extended to six or seven hundred years; it is easy to imagine how such a doctrine, in such circumstances, might have been propagated by oral tradition, without any great change or alterations. Adam lived till Methuselah was above two hundred years old, Methuselah lived till Shem was near a hundred, and Shem outlived Abraham: so that this tradition need not pass through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was sufficient to have preserved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themselves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for, through the corruption and negligence of men after the flood (if not before), when the world began to multiply, and the age of

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man was shortened, the knowledge and worship of the one true God was generally lost in the world. And so far as appears by Scripture history (the only record we have of those times) when God called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapsed into polytheism and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater security of religion afterwards, when the posterity of Abraham was multiplied into a great nation, the wisdom of God did not think fit to entrust the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of tradition, but committed it to writing. Now that God pitched upon this way, after the world had sadly experienced the unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good evidence that this was the better and more secure way; it being the usual method of the Divine dispensations not to go backward, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the apostle's * reasoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion; "if the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second."

* Heb. viii. 7.

§. 3. So, likewise, when Christ revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his life-time committed to writing, because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the apostles, who were to publish this doctrine to the world, were assisted by an infallible Spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to con-

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vey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom (Homil. 1. in Matt.) who tells us, "That Christ left nothing in writing to his apostles, but instead thereof did promise to bestow upon them the grace of his Holy Spirit, saying, (John xiv.) 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance,' &c. But because in progress of time there were many grievous miscarriages, both in matters of opinion, and also of life and manners; therefore it was requisite, that the memory of this doctrine should be preserved by writing." So long then as the apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§. 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument against the way of tradition by writing, which he lays so much weight upon, * "That the apostles and their successors went not with books in their hands to preach and deliver Christ's doctrine, but words in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned their faith by another method, a long time before many of those books were universally spread among the vulgar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilst those living oracles the apostles were present with the church; doth it therefore follow that there was no need of it afterwards when the apostles were dead, and that extraordinary and su-

* P. 40.

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pernatural assistance was ceased? If the preachers now-a-days could give us any such assurance, and confirm all they preach by such frequent, and public, and unquestionable miracles, as the apostles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they delivered to us: but seeing this is not the case, that ought in all reason to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of Christ with the greatest certainty; and this I shall prove the Scriptures to have done.

§. 5. So that in those circumstances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but now considering the great increase of mankind, and the shortness of man's life in these latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the apostle's age down to us, and the innumerable accidents whereby in the space of one thousand five hundred years, oral tradition might receive insensible alterations, so as at last to become quite another thing from what it was at first, by passing through many hands; in which passage all the mistakes and corruptions which (in the several ages through which it was transmitted) did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or out of interest and design, are necessarily derived into the last; so that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; because as it passeth along, more errors and corruptions are infused into it: I say, considering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of Christian religion could, with any probable security and certainty, have been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God, foreseeing this, did in his wisdom so

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order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible Spirit in the delivery of this doctrine should, before they left the world, commit it to writing; which was accordingly done: and by this instrument the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§. 6. Secondly, We allow, that tradition, oral and written, do give us sufficient assurance that the books of Scripture which we now have, are the very books which were written by the apostles and evangelists: nay, farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case; but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general assurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontrolled tradition of this, transmitted from one age to another, partly orally, and partly by the testimony of other books. Thus much is common to Scripture with other books. But then the Scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books—that, being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and studied than any other books in the world whatsoever; and, consequently, they have a more universal and better-grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all ages by Christians (except three or four books of them, which for some time were questioned by some churches, but have since been generally received), but the greatest enemies of our religion, the Jews and heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that

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they were the very books which the apostles wrote. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient book, without a particular and immediate revelation.

§. 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question (What is the rule of faith?) is, What is the next and immediate means whereby the knowledge of Christ's doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know that these are the books of Scripture, yet these books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know what is Christ's doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§. 8. Nor doth this concession make oral tradition to be the rule of faith by a parity of reason; as if, because we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a book to after ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine consisting of several articles of faith (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges *) and many laws and precepts of life: so because oral tradition sufficiently assures us that this is *magna charta*, and that the statute-book, in which are contained "those laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in;" therefore, by like parity of reason, it must follow, that tradition itself is better than a book, even "the best way imaginable to convey down such laws to us." Mr. S. saith † expressly it is; but how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wisdom of all lawgivers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down from hand to hand

* Rushw. Dial. 4. sect. 9.

† P. 93.

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of the sense and faith of forefathers," *i. e.* of the gospel or message of Christ. Now suppose any oral message, consisting of a hundred particularities, were to be delivered to a hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to a hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and so onwards to a hundred descents; is it probable this message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many letters, concerning which every bearer should need to say no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the men's lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter: for the letter is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the errand, so difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the messengers, that he either forgets, or mistakes something in it; it is ten thousand to one, that the first hundred do not all agree in it; it is a million to one, that the next succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the first hundred mistook or forgot any thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes the greater changes it is liable to. Yet, after all this, I do not say but it may be demonstrated, in Mr. S.'s way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§. 9. Thirdly, We allow, that the doctrine of Christian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the pastors of the church, and taught by Christian parents to their children; but

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with great difference, by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with less care and exactness, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in pastors or parents; and likewise with very different success, according to the different capacities and dispositions of the learners. We allow, likewise, that there hath been a constant course of visible actions, conformable, in some measure, to the principles of Christianity; but then we say, that those outward acts and circumstances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by the addition to them, and defalcation from them, in several ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his demonstration. Now, that several of the main doctrines of faith contained in the Scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by Christians in all ages (as the articles summed up in the apostles' creed, the use of the two sacraments) is a good evidence so far, that the Scriptures contain the doctrine of Christian religion. But then, if we consider how we come to know that such points of faith have been taught, and such external actions practised, in all ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present multitude of Christians that profess to have received such doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the inconsequence of which argument I shall have a better occasion to shew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's satisfaction, must make it evident from the best monuments and records of several ages, that is, from the most authentic books of those times, that such doctrines have in all those ages been constantly and universally taught

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and practised. But then, if, from those records of former times, it appear that other doctrines, not contained in the Scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, some in one age, and some in another, according as ignorance and superstition in the people, ambition and interest in the chief pastors of the church, have ministered occasion and opportunity; and that the innovators of these doctrines and practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of Scripture as the acknowledged rule of faith; and have likewise acknowledged the books of Scripture to have descended without any material corruption or alteration (all which will sufficiently appear in the process of my discourse); then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the present church, concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real foundation in Scripture, be any argument against these books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Christian doctrine. And to say the Scripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reasonable than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law by the present practice of it; which every one, that compares things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

SECT. V.

How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than protestants to theirs.

§. 1. SECONDLY, How much more he attributes to his rule of faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours.

1. We do not say, that it is impossible,

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in the nature of the thing, that this rule should fail, that is, either that these books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no need we should. We believe the providence of God will take care of them, and secure them from being either lost or materially corrupted; yet we think it very possible that all the books in the world may be burned or otherwise destroyed: all that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient (if men be not wanting to themselves) to convey the Christian doctrine to all successive ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of Christian religion in the world.

§. 2. Secondly, Nor do we say, that that certainty and assurance which we have, that these books are the same that were written by the apostles, is a first and self-evident principle: but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say that tradition's certainty is a first and self-evident principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. Aristotle was so wise as never to demonstrate first principles, for which he gives this very good reason—because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent men are of opinion, that a self-evident principle, of all things in the world, should not be demonstrated, because it needs not: for to what purpose should a man write a book to prove that which every man must assent to without any proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a self-evident principle to be such a

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proposition, as having in itself sufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing else. If I be herein mistaken, I desire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§. 3. So that the true state of the controversy between us, is, whether oral and practical tradition, in opposition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christ can with certainty and security be conveyed down to us, who live at this distance from the age of Christ and his apostles: this he affirms, and the protestants deny, not only that it is the sole means, but that it is sufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of Holy Scripture, as the proper measure and standard of our religion: but then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge of these books; nor do they exclude the authentic records of former ages, nor the constant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being subordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, so far are they from excluding these concurrent means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by, these sacred oracles, the Holy Scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which Christ delivered to his apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: Suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logic which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of

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opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand by consulting those of the present age, who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his Organon, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from, the obvious sense of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of disputing which is used by the professed Aristotelians of the present age, and with all that scholastic jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him so great a man in the science of all controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate first and self-evident principles, a trick not to be learned out of Aristotle's Organon. The application is so easy that I need not make it.

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PART II.

Concerning the Properties of the Rule of Faith; and whether they agree solely to Oral Tradition.

SECT. I.

§. 1. HAVING thus endeavoured to bring the controversy between us to its clear and true state, that so we might not quarrel in the dark, and dispute about we know not what; I come now to grapple more closely with his book. And the main foundations of his discourse may be reduced to these three heads:

First, That the essential properties of such a way and means as can with certainty and security convey down to us the doctrine of Christ, belong solely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his five first discourses.

Secondly, That it is impossible that this way of oral tradition should fail. And this he pretends to prove in his four last discourses.

Thirdly, That oral tradition hath been generally reputed by Christians in all ages, the sole way and means of conveying down to them the doctrine of Christ. And this he attempts to shew in his last chapter, which he calls, "The consent of authority to the substance of his foregoing discourses." If he make good these three things, he hath acquitted himself well in his undertaking; but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

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§. 2. First, Whether the essential properties of such a way and means as can with certainty and security convey down to us the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, belong solely to oral tradition?

The true way to measure the essential properties of this or that means, is, by considering its sufficiency for its end: for whatsoever is necessary to make any means sufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an essential property of that means, and nothing else. Now, because the end we are speaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of Christ's doctrine to all those who are concerned to know it, in such a manner as they may be sufficiently certain and secure that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was first delivered: from hence it appears, that the means to this end must have these two properties: First, It must be sufficiently plain and intelligible. 2dly, It must be sufficiently certain to us, that is, such as we may be fully satisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have these two conditions, it is sufficient for its end; but if it want either of them, it must necessarily fall short of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be assured, that that doctrine which it brings down to us for the doctrine of Christ, is really such.

§. 3. I know he assigns more properties of this means, which he calls the rule of faith; but upon examination, it will appear that they either fall in with these two, or do not at all belong to it: as,

First, That* "it must be plain and self-evident to all, as to its existence." Nothing can be more frivolous than to make this a

* P. 11.

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property of any thing; because whosoever inquires into the properties of a thing, is supposed to be already satisfied that the thing is.

* P. 11. Secondly, That it be* "evidenceable as to its ruling power;" that is, as he † P. 3. explains himself,† "that men be capable of knowing that it deserves to be relied on as a rule." By which he must either understand the certainty of it; (and then it falls in with the second property I mentioned, and is the same with the sixth which he lays down;) or else he means, more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule: for I understand not how a man can know that any thing deserves to be relied on as a rule, otherwise than by knowing that it hath the properties of a rule; that is, that it is sufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the evidence of a thing, as to its existence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a thing, be another.

‡ P. 12. §. 4. Thirdly, That it be‡ "apt to settle and justify undoubting persons." What he means here by "settling undoubting persons," I am not able, on a sudden, to comprehend, because I understand not what unsettles a man besides doubting; for if a man be but so well satisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be settled better, that is, how his mind can be more at rest, than not to doubt. But if by undoubting persons he means those who do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by "apt to settle undoubting persons," viz. apt to settle persons when they do doubt, that

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is, when they are not undoubting persons. As for "justifying undoubting persons," if he means that whosoever securely relies on this rule ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly consequent upon the two properties I have laid down: for if the means of conveying Christ's doctrine be sufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is justified in so doing, because he trusts a means which is sufficient for its end.

§. 5. Fourthly, That* it be "apt to satisfy fully the most sceptical dissenters and rational doubters." For its aptitude to satisfy rational doubters, that plainly follows from the sufficient certainty of it; but why it should be a necessary property of a rule of faith, to be apt to satisfy the most sceptical dissenter, I can no more divine, than I can, why he should call a dissenter sceptical, which are repugnant terms: for a sceptic is one who neither assents to any thing, nor dissents: but is in a perpetual suspense, because he looks upon every opinion as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the scales either way. But if by "the most sceptical dissenter" he means only a sceptic, one that doth not believe the doctrine of Christ, nor any thing else; then I would fain know, what that is which in reason is apt fully to satisfy such a person. If any thing will, sure a demonstration will; but there is no aptitude at all in a demonstration, to satisfy him who doubts whether there be any such thing as a demonstration, and likewise questions the certainty of all those principles from whence any conclusion can be demonstrated. And those who are most sceptical, profess to doubt of all this.

* P. 11, 12.

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* P. 12. §. 6. Fifthly, That it * be "apt to convince the most obstinate and acute adversary." If the rule be plain and certain, the most acute adversary may be convinced by it if he will, that is, if he be not obstinate; but if he be obstinate, that is, such an one as will not be convinced, but will persist in his error in despite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I must profess that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man who will not be convinced by any reason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any rule of faith, though never so self-evident, he might have learned from the same author, in whom he may find his chief properties of the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to have considered his explication of them; I mean Dr. Holden, † who lays down the second property of the rule of faith (or, as he calls it, "the means whereby we come to the knowledge of revealed truth") in these words: "Another (viz. condition of this means, &c.) is, That it be apt of its own nature to afford the greatest true and rational certainty, to all men without exception, to whom the knowledge of it shall come: provided they be furnished with the faculty of reason, and have their minds purified from all passion and lust, which do (as he tells us, cap. 6.) often hinder the most sagacious persons from understanding the most evident and manifest truth." Now I suppose obstinacy to be the effects of passion and lust.

† Analys. Fid. l. 1 c. 3.

If Mr. S. mean, that the rule of faith must be apt to conquer obstinacy, and make men lay it aside, I cannot understand this neither; unless he mean that the rule of faith must be a cudgel, which the traditionary church have been good at, and may use it

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again when occasion serves; for none but they have a title to it, upon a church account, as Mr. S. tells us, corol. 10. But setting aside this, I do not know any thing else that is apt to conquer obstinacy: not the clearest reason, or the strongest demonstration, for that I am sure is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreasonable humour with any probability of success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may easily be convinced by experience how unapt obstinate persons are to be convinced by reason. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of Christ, preached by himself and his apostles to the obstinate Jews, and confirmed by multitudes of unquestionable miracles; and yet we do not find by the success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwise than by the usual and frequent success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the doctrine of the gospel was ever intended for that purpose. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverse, but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn: and such a disposition supposeth a man to have laid asside both scepticism and obstinacy.

§. 7. Sixthly, That * it be "certain in itself." * P. 12.

Seventhly, That † it be "absolutely ascertainable to us." † Ibid.

These two are comprehended in the second property I laid down; so that I have nothing to say against them, but that the last looks very like a contradiction, "absolutely ascertainable to us;" which

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is to say, *with respect to us, without respect to us*, for *absolutely* seems to exclude respect, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the seven properties he mentions are either coincident with those two I have laid down, or consequent upon them, or absurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are those two which I first named, and no more.

SECT. II.

That the properties of a rule of faith belong to Scripture.

§. 1. LET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these properties agree solely to oral tradition. He tells us there are but two pretenders to this title of being the rule of faith, Scripture and oral tradition; these properties do not belong to Scripture, and they do to oral tradition, therefore solely to it. A very good argument, if he can prove these two things—that these two properties do not belong to Scripture, and that they do to oral tradition.

§. 2. In order to the proving of the first, that these properties do not belong to Scripture, he premiseth this note, * that "we cannot by the Scriptures mean the sense of them, but the book," that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted. But why can we not, by the Scriptures, mean the sense of them? He gives this clear and admirable reason, Because the sense of the Scripture is, "the things to be known, and these we confess are the very points of faith, of which the rule of faith is to ascertain us." Which is just as if a man should reason thus: Those who say the statute-book can convey to them the knowledge of the

* P. 13.

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statute-law, cannot by the statute-book mean the sense of it, but the book; that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted; because the sense of the statute-book is, the things to be known, and these are the very laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this book; which is to say, that a book connot convey to a man the knowledge of any matter, because, if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But, that he may further see what excellent reasoning this is, I shall apply this paragraph to oral tradition, for the argument holds every whit as well concerning that. To speak to them then in their own language, who say that oral tradition is their rule, we must premise this note—that they cannot mean by oral tradition the sense of it, that is, the things to be known; for those, they confess, are the very points of faith, of which the rule of faith is to ascertain us. When they say, then, that oral tradition is the rule of faith, they can only mean by oral tradition the words wherein it is delivered, not yet sensed or interpreted, but as yet to be sensed; that is, such or such sounds, with their aptness to signify to them assuredly God's mind, or ascertain them of their faith; for abstracting from the sense and actual signification of these words, there is nothing imaginable left but those sounds, with their aptness to signify it. When he hath answered this argument, he will have answered his own. In the mean while, this discourse, that he who holds the Scripture to be the rule of faith, must needs by the Scriptures mean a book void of sense, &c. because otherwise if by Scripture he should understand a book that hath a certain sense in it, that sense must be the doctrine of Christ, which is the very thing that this book is to convey

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to us; I say, this discourse tends only to prove it an absurd thing for any man, that holds Scripture the means of conveying Christ's doctrine, to understand by the Scripture, a book that conveys Christ's doctrine. This being his own reason, put into plain English, I leave the reader to judge whether it be not something short of perfect science and demonstration. Nay, if it were thoroughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall short of that low pitch of science which he speaks of in his preface, where he tells us, that "the way of science is to proceed from one piece of sense to another."

§. 3. Having premised this, that by the Scriptures we must mean only dead characters that have no sense under them, he proceeds to shew that these dead characters have not the properties of a rule of faith belonging to them: which, although it be nothing to the purpose when he hath shewn it, yet it is very pleasant to observe by what cross and untoward arguments he goes about it; of which I will give the reader a taste by one or two instances.

In the first place he shews that it cannot be evident to us that these books were written by men divinely inspired, because* "till the seeming contradictions in those books are solved, which to do, is one of the most difficult tasks in the world, they cannot be concluded to be of God's inditing." Now how is this an argument against those who by the Scriptures must mean unsensed letters and characters? I had always thought contradictions had been in the sense of words, not in the letters and characters; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters do contradict one another.

* P. 14.

The other instance shall be in his last argument, † which is this: that the Scripture

† P. 17.

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cannot be the rule of faith, because those who are to be ruled and guided by the Scripture's letter to faith, cannot be certain of the true sense of it; which is to say, that unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, because the rule of faith must have a certain sense, that is, must not be unsensed letters and characters; which in plain English amounts to thus much—unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, that they cannot.

§. 4. And thus I might trace him through all his properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader see how incomparably he demonstrates the falsehood of this protestant tenet (as he calls it), that a senseless book may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of pursuing him in these airy and fantastical combats, and shall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and batter down the castles which himself hath built. Only I think fit here to acquaint him, once for all, with a great secret of the protestant doctrine, which it seems he hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am still more confirmed in my opinion, that he forsook our religion before he understood it), that when they say the Scriptures are the rule of faith, or the means whereby Christ's doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean, by the Scriptures, books written in such words as do sufficiently express the sense and meaning of Christ's doctrine.

§. 5. And to satisfy him that we are not absurd and unreasonable in supposing the Scriptures to be such a book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me these four things, or shew reason to the contrary:

First, That whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words, and such as have a certain sense, may be written in the same words.

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Secondly, That the same words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are spoken.

Thirdly, That God, if he please, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

Fourthly, That we have no reason to think that God affects obscurity, and envies that men should understand him in those things which are necessary for them to know, and which must have been written to no purpose if we cannot understand them.

St. Luke * tells Theophilus, that he wrote the history of Christ to him, on purpose to give him a certain knowledge of those things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain sense, should give a man certain knowledge of things, is beyond my capacity. St. John † saith, that he purposely committed several of Christ's miracles to writing, that men might believe on him. But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have advised him to spare his labour, and would have given him this good reason for it; because, when he had written his book, nobody would be able to find the certain sense of it without oral tradition, and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of Christ, and the certain knowledge of those miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If these four things be but granted, I see not why, when we say that the Scriptures are the means of conveying to us Christ's doctrine, we may not be allowed to understand by the Scriptures, a book which doth in plain and intelligible words express to us this doctrine.

* Luke i. 3, 4.

† John xx. 31.

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SECT. III.

§. 1. And now, although this might have been a sufficient answer to his exceptions against the Scriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by protestants, viz. that the Scriptures are only a heap of dead letters and insignificant characters, without any sense under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and sense: yet, because several of his exceptions pretend to shew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the Scriptures; therefore I shall give particular answers to them, and, as I go along, shew that tradition is liable to all or most of those exceptions, and to far greater than those.

Mr. S.'s exceptions against Scripture examined.

§. 2. Whereas he says,* it cannot be evident to protestants, from their principles, that the books of Scripture were originally written by men divinely inspired: I will shew him that it may, and then answer the reasons of this exception.

* P. 13.

It is evident, from an universal, constant, and uncontrolled tradition among Christians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greatest adversaries of our religion, that these books were originally written by the apostles and evangelists. And this is not only a protestant principle, but the principle of all mankind, "That an undoubted tradition is sufficient evidence of the antiquity and author of a book," and all the extrin-

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sical arguments that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the apostles were men divinely inspired, that is, secured from error and mistake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; because it is unreasonable to imagine, that the Divine power should so remarkably interpose for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give so eminent an attestation to the apostles to convince the world that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by God, and yet not secure them from error in the delivery of it. And that such miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible histories as we have for any of those things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better evidence that the apostles were men divinely inspired, than bare oral tradition can furnish us withal: for setting aside the authentic relation of these matters in books, it is most probable, that oral tradition of itself, and without books, would scarce have preserved the memory of any of those particular miracles of our Saviour and his apostles which are recorded in Scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer these two things to his consideration:

First, No man can deny that memorable persons have lived, and actions been done, in the world, innumerable, whereof no history now extant makes any mention.

Secondly, He himself will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in Scripture. And now I challenge him to shew the single virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of any of those persons, or their actions, who lived fifteen hundred or two thousand years

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ago, besides those which are mentioned in books; or to give a catalogue but of ten of those innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal: if he can do this, it will be a good evidence that oral tradition singly, and by itself, can do something; but if he cannot, it is as plain an evidence on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our Saviour and his apostles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but entrusted solely to oral tradition, we should have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of those that were never written.

§. 3. Now to examine his reasons for this exception:

First, He saith, * it is most manifest that this cannot be made evident to the vulgar, that Scripture was written by men divinely inspired. This reason is as easily answered, by saying, it is most manifest that it can: but besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds that there was such a king as William the Conqueror; and the miracles of Christ and his apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this.

* P. 13.

Secondly, He says, † this cannot be evident to the "curious and most speculative searchers, but by so deep an inspection into the sense of Scripture, as shall discover such secrets, that philosophy and human industry could never have arrived to." As if we could not be assured

† P. 13, 14.

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that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of human understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's doctrine, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, that do ye likewise unto them," because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the Scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness and sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which tend to persuade us that the person is so inspired; and the argument that is most fit to satisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now I would gladly know, why a learned man cannot be assured of a miracle, that is, a plain sensible matter of fact done long ago, but "by so deep an inspection into the sense of Scripture, as shall discover such secrets, that philosophy and human industry could never have arrived to."

§. 3. Thirdly, Because * "all the seeming contradictions of Scripture must be solved, before we can out of the bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's inditing; to solve which literally, plainly, and satisfactorily, (he tells us) the memory of so many particulars, which made them clearer to those of the age in which they were written, and the matter known, must needs be so worn out by tract of time, that it is one of the most difficult tasks in the world." As if we could not believe a book to be of God's inditing, because there seem now to be some contradictions in it; which we have reason to believe could easily have

* P. 14.

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been solved by those who lived in the age in which it was written. Or, as if oral tradition could help a man to solve these contradictions, when the memory of particulars necessary for the clear solution of them, is (as himself confesses) worn out by tract of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the solution of the seeming contradictions of Scripture, demonstrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preserved the memory of those particulars (necessary for that purpose), the memory of which must needs be long since worn out by tract of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument against our rule, which is as strong against his own? This is just like Captain Everard's friend's way of arguing against the protestants, viz. That they cannot rely upon Scripture, because it is full of plain contradictions impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reason to submit to the infallibility of the church. And for an instance of such a contradiction, he pitcheth upon the three fourteen generations mentioned in the first of St. Matthew; because the third series of generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now, how this difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied both by protestant and popish commentators, without any recourse to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is, the unreasonableness of making this an exception against the protestants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themselves. Suppose this contradiction not capable of any solution by protestants (as he affirms), and I should submit to the infallibility of the church; can he assure me that infallibility can make thirteen

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fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer satisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the church? The case is the very same as to Mr. S.'s exception; if I owned oral tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming contradictions of Scripture, and consequently I could not "in reason conclude it to be of God's inditing." So that, in truth, these exceptions, if they were true, would not strike at protestancy, but at Christian religion; which is the general unhappiness of most of the popish arguments; than which, there is no greater evidence, that the church of Rome is not the true mother, because she had rather Christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It was a work very proper for the heretic Marcion to assault religion this way; who, as Tertullian * tells us, wrote a whole book, which he called Antitheses, wherein he reckoned up all the contradictions, (as he thought) between the Old and New Testament: but methinks it is very improper for the papists, who pretend to be the only true Christians in the world, to strain their wits to discover as many contradictions as they can in the Scripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them; the natural consequence of which is, the exposing of this sacred instrument of our religion, and even Christianity itself, to the scorn of atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and Captain Everard, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief fruits of their conversion is to abuse the Bible.

* L. 1. contra Marcion.

§. 5. Secondly, He says, † that protestants cannot know how many the books of Scripture "ought to be, and which of the many controverted ones may be securely put in that cata-

† P. 14.

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logue, which not." This he proves by saying, "'Tis most palpable, that few, or at least the rude vulgar, can never be assured of it." And if this be a good argument, this again is a good answer, to say it is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know, that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted books, concerning which it cannot be shewn there was ever any controversy; and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that question hath been made: and if those which have been controverted have been since received by those churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, because the controversy about them is at an end. And now I would fain know what greater certainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue of the books of Scripture: for it must either acknowledge some books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a supposition of controverted books? If oral tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted, nor consequently that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those churches who did once raise a controversy about them, have been since satisfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church now receive the Epistle to the Hebrews as canonical. I ask, do they receive it as ever delivered for such? That they must, if they receive it from oral tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered; and yet St. Jerome (speaking not as a speculator, but a testifier) saith expressly of it, † "that the custom of the Latin church doth not re-

† Com. in Esai. c. 6. et c. 8.

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ceive it among the canonical Scriptures." What saith Mr. S. to this? It is clear from this testimony, that the Roman church, in St. Jerome's time, did not acknowledge this Epistle for canonical; and it is as plain, that the present Roman church doth receive it for canonical. Where is then the infallibility of oral tradition? How does the living voice of the present church assure us, that what books are now received by her were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the matter must come to be tried by the best records of former ages (which the protestants are willing to have the catalogue tried by), then it seems the protestants have a better way to know what books are canonical, than is the infallible way of oral tradition; and so long as it is better, no matter, though it be not called infallible.

* P. 15. §. 6. Thirdly, He says * the protestants cannot know, "that the very original, or a perfectly true copy of these books, hath been preserved." It is not necessary that they should know either of these; it is sufficient that they know that those copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of faith or practice; and that they have sufficient assurance of this, I have already shewn. And how doth he prove the contrary? By his usual argument, with saying, "it is manifestly impossible!" But how do the church of Rome know that they have perfectly true copies of the Scripture in the original languages? They do not pretend to know this; the learned men of that church acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwise than by probable conjecture (as we also may do) which of those readings is the true one. And why should it

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be more necessary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reasonable to content themselves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into those books, so may we. And that there have not, we know by better arguments than oral tradition, even by the assurance we have of God's vigilant providence, and from a moral impossibility that the things in a book so universally dispersed, and translated into so many languages, and constantly read in the assemblies of Christians, should have been materially corrupted, so as that all those copies and translations should have agreed in those corruptions. And this reason St. Austin * gives, of the preservation of the Scriptures entire rather than any other book; if Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Austin to account for it.

* Ep. 48.

§. 7. Fourthly, He says, † the protestants, "at least the rudest vulgar," can have no assurance "that those books are rightly translated," because they cannot be assured either of the ability or integrity of translators.

† P. 15.

Fifthly, "Nor can they (says he †) be assured, that the transcribers, and printers, and correctors" of the press, have carefully and faithfully done their part, in transcribing and printing the several copies and translations of Scripture aright; because "they only can have evidence of the right letter of Scripture, who stood at their elbows attentively watching they should not err in making it perfectly like a former copy; and even then, why might they not mistrust their own eyes and aptness to oversee?" I put these two exceptions together, because the same answer will serve them both. The grounds of these exceptions, if they have

† P. 16, 17.

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any, are these: That no man is to be trusted either for his skill or honesty; and that it is dangerous for men to trust their own eyes. Unless both these be true, these exceptions are of no force: for if we can be assured that other men have sufficient skill in any thing which we ourselves do not sufficiently understand, we may be assured that those who translated the Bible had skill in the original languages; because very credible persons tell us so, and we have no reason to doubt their testimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that if we can have sufficient assurance of men's integrity in any thing, we have no reason to doubt of the skill of translators, transcribers, or printers; and if we can have no assurance of men's integrity in any thing, then no man can be assured that there was such a man as Henry the Eighth; and yet I hope the church of Rome makes no doubt of it: nor can any man be assured there is such a city as Rome, who hath not seen it; nay, if he have, * "why may he not mistrust his own eyes?" And, which is the saddest inconvenience of all, if nobody be to be trusted, nor men's own eyes, (and for the same reason, sure, nor their ears) what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition? which necessarily supposeth a competent understanding, a faithful memory, and honest mind, in the generality of those who delivered Christ's doctrine down to us: and by what means soever a man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the ability and integrity of translators, transcribers, and printers. But above all, it supposeth that men's ears and eyes cannot deceive them in those things which they are taught and see practised.

* P. 16.

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Is it not very pretty to see what pitiful shifts men that serve an hypothesis are put to, when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities of scepticism! and, to defend the certainty of oral tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of men's senses, and an assurance of the ability and integrity of those who were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary! such as these—that we can have no assurance, but that whole professions of men* "might hap to be knaves;" that we can have no sufficient evidence that any man made his "copy perfectly like the former," unless† "we stood at his elbow attentively watching him:" nay, and if we did so, we have still reason to distrust our senses. In short, all human faith supposeth honesty among men; and that for matters of fact and plain objects of sense, the general and uncontrolled testimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of those who are accounted skilful in that kind are to be relied upon: for, as Aristotle well observes, there is no greater sign of an undisciplined wit, (or, to use one of Mr. S.'s fine phrases,‡ of a man "not acquainted with the paths of science") than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reason to be assured of a thing which is capable of sufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have; and, as Mr. White says well, "*Satisfaction is to be given to every one, according to his capacity; it is sufficient for a child to believe his parents, for a

*P. 16.

† Ibid.

‡ Preface.

*Answer to the Lord Falkland, p. 33.

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clown to believe his preacher." And this is universally true in all cases where we have not better or equal evidence to the contrary. But such is the unhappiness of the popish doctrines, that if people were permitted the free use of the Scripture, they would easily discern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be safe for their preachers to tell the people that the Scripture is the only rule of faith, lest they should find cause not to believe them when they teach doctrines so plainly contrary to that rule.

†P. 17. §. 8. Lastly, He says, †the protestants cannot be "certain of the true sense of Scripture." Does he mean of plain texts, or obscure ones? of the true sense of plain texts I hope every one may be certain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But it may be there are no plain texts in the Scriptures: then the reason of it must be, (till Mr. S. can shew a better) either because it is impossible for any one to write plainly, or because God cannot write so plainly as men; or because we have good reason to think that he would not write things necessary for every one to believe, so as men might clearly understand him.

†P. 17. But he tells us,† "the numerous comments upon Scripture" are an evidence that no man can be certain of the true sense of it. I hope not; for if those numerous commentators do generally agree in the sense of plain texts, (as it is certain they do) then this argument signifies nothing as to such texts; and as for those which are obscure, let commentators differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary points of faith and matters of practice are delivered in plain texts. He

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adds,* "There are infinite disputes about the sense of Scripture, even in the most concerning points, as in that of Christ's Divinity." But are not commentators, both protestant and popish, generally agreed about the sense of Scripture in that point? and what if some out of prejudice mistake, or out of perverseness do wrest, the plainest texts of Scripture for the Divinity of Christ to another sense? is this any argument that those texts are not sufficiently plain? can any thing be spoken or written in words so clear from ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind shall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the Scriptures for the froward and the captious, but for those who will read them with a free and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the Divinity of Christ out of Scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. Chrysostom †professes to demonstrate out of Scripture, "that the Son is of the same substance with the Father;" and relies upon Scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of argument: so that it seems St. Chrysostom was not acquainted with the insufficiency of Scripture for the conviction of heretics in this point; and that he was either ignorant of the *(infallible)* way of demonstrating this point from oral tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same father, elsewhere, † arguing against heretics about the Divinity of Christ, says, that "they pervert the Scriptures, to strengthen their heresy from thence." But then he does not

* P. 17.

† Hom. 32. de Consubstant.

† Hom. 7. de Sancto Phoca.

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(with Mr. S.) blame the Scripture, and say that this doctrine is not there delivered with sufficient clearness; but contrariwise, he says, that the Scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds of heretics will not see what is there contained. Had St. Chrysostom been a true son of the traditionary church, he would have laid hold of this occasion to vilify the Scriptures, and to shew the necessity of regulating our faith not by such uncertain records, but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

§. 9. But because Mr. S. lays great weight (in several parts of his book) upon this exception against Scripture, viz. that protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of it; therefore I shall not content myself, only to have shewn that we may be sufficiently certain of the sense of Scripture, so far as to understand all necessary matters of faith and practice, and that more than this is not necessary; but shall likewise return this exception upon him, by inquiring into these two things:

1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of Scripture than the protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true sense of tradition, than protestants of the true sense of Scripture?

1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of Scripture than protestants? They pretend to have an oral tradition of the true sense of it, delivered down from father to son. But this only reached to those texts which are coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine; as for all other parts of Scripture, they are as useless to papists, as they suppose they are to us; because, wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be

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certain of one tittle of them. And as for those texts, the sense whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this sense is, I hope, delivered in some words or other: and have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurses, the faculty of delivering this sense in words so plain as cannot possibly be mistaken or wrested to another sense? I am sorry that when every one hath this faculty of speaking his thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghost should be represented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himself? If the church have a certain sense of Scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite disputes about the sense of it, in the most concerning points? viz. the efficacy of God's grace, the supremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a pope and council by immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost? What a stir is made about the sense of *Dabo tibi Claves, Tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram, &c. Pasce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of these texts among themselves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the protestants? Some understanding them of St. Peter's supremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to pope or council from any immediate assistance, but only from the rational force of tradition, supposing that the pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain sense of these texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? If it have not (to use a hot phrase of his own †), "it is perfect frenzy to say they can be certain of the true sense of Scripture."

† P. 17.

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If he say, they are by tradition made certain of the true sense of Scripture, so far as it concerns the main body of Christian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is sufficient; then I ask him, What are those points of faith which make up the body of Christian doctrine? He will tell me, they are those which all catholics agree to have descended to them from the apostles by a constant and uninterrupted tradition. I inquire further, how I shall know what is the certain sense of Scripture so far as it concerns these points? He must answer as before, that that is the true sense which all catholics agree to have descended to them by tradition. Which amounts to this: that all catholics do agree in the sense of Scripture so far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the protestants (how much soever at present they differ about the sense of Scripture) may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a passage or two of Mr. Cressy; the one in his Appendix, * where he tells us, that "as it is impossible that heretics should agree in any other way than in faction; so it is impossible that catholics should differ in points of faith." Why so? Were not those catholics first, who afterwards became heretics? and when they became so, did they not differ in points of belief? Yes, but here lies the conceit, when they began to differ, then they ceased to be catholics; therefore catholics can never differ in points of faith. The other passage is where he says, † that he "hath forsaken a church where unity was impossible, &c. and betaken himself to a church where schism is impossible." This last clause, "that schism is impossible" in their church,

* Exomolog. 2d edit. p. 554.

† Exomolog. c. 53. sect. 2.

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cannot possibly be true but in the same absurd and ludicrous sense, in which it is impossible for catholics to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny but that it is possible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his sense is schism. But here is the subtilty of it: No schismatic is of their church, because so soon as he is a schismatic he is out of it; therefore schism is impossible in their church. And is it not as impossible in the church of England? where Mr. Cressy might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiser reason for forsaking her.

§. 10. But to return to our purpose. Mr. Rushworth * acknowledgeth, that the Scripture is of itself sufficiently plain as to matters of practice; for he asks, "Who is so blind as not to see that these things are to be found in Scripture by a sensible, common, and discreet reading of it; though perhaps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular word and syllable, any of these things would vanish away we know not how?" So that, for the direction of our lives and actions, he confesseth the Scripture to be sufficiently plain, if men will but read it sensibly and discreetly; and (he says) that he is blind that does not see this. But who so blind as he that will not see, that the sense of Scripture is as plain in all necessary points of faith? I am sure St. Austin makes no difference, when he tells us, † that "in those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, we may find all those things which in faith and manners of life are comprehended." And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith as well as of practice,

* Dial. 2. sect. 12.

† De Doctr. Christ. l. 2.

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read the Scriptures sensibly and discreetly, without such a rigorous balancing of every word and syllable, as will make the sense vanish away we know not how? If the Scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it sensibly and discreetly, I do not understand what greater plainness can be desired in a rule; nor can I imagine what kind of rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

Well, suppose the Scriptures be not sufficiently clear as to matters of faith, and hereupon I have recourse to the church for the true sense of Scripture; must I believe the church's sense to be the true sense of such a text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine sense of the words? Yes, that I must, or else I make myself, and not the church, judge of the sense of Scripture, which is the grand heresy of the protestants. But then I must not suppose, much less believe, that the church's sense of such a text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so: this is hard again on the other hand; especially if that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy, viz. that though general councils cannot mistake in their points of faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the confirmation of them from texts of Scripture; that is, they may be mistaken about the sense of those texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second council of Nice (to mention no other), which, to establish their doctrine of image worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of Scripture, that I can

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hardly believe that any papist in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers.

§. 11. Secondly, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of their traditional doctrines, than the protestants can be of the true sense of Scripture? And this is worthy of our inquiry, because, if the business be searched to the bottom, it will appear (besides all other inconveniences, which oral tradition is much more liable to than Scripture), that the certain sense and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the sense of Scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary consequence from their own concessions. Mr. White and Mr. S. say, that the great security of tradition is this: that it is not tied to certain phrases and set forms of expression, but the same sense is conveyed and settled in men's hearts by various expressions. But, according to Mr. Rushworth, this renders tradition's sense uncertain; for he says, * "'Tis impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same sense in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a sensible, common, discreet way (as Mr. Rushworth speaks concerning reading the Scriptures), but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phrase, word and syllable, the sense of tradition will be in the very same danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vanish we know not how. Dr. Holden † lays down these two principles: "First, That no truth can be conveyed down from man to man but by speech; and speech cannot be but by words; and all words are either equivocal in themselves, or liable to be differently

* Dial. 2. sect. 6.

† Analys. Fidei, l. 1. c. 9.

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understood by several persons. Secondly, That such is the frame of man's mind, that the same truths may be differently apprehended and understood by different persons:" and if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be delivered by speech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities, as to their sense, as well as Scripture. Mr. Cressy* tells us, "That reason and experience shew, that differences will arise even about the writings of the fathers, and any thing but the testimony of the present church." If this be true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if difference will arise about the writings of the fathers, how they are to be interpreted, I suppose the writings of councils will be liable to the same inconvenience: and if the whole present church cannot declare her sense of any traditional doctrine otherwise than by a council, (unless with the Jesuits they will epitomize the church into the pope) and the decrees of a council cannot be universally dispersed (or at least never use to be) but by writing: and if differences will arise about the interpretation of that writing, as well as any other; then this present infallible authority (which Mr. Cressy magnifies so much for ending of differences) leaves all controversies arising about the sense of tradition as indeterminable as ever; and they must for ever remain so, till general councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in words which will so infallibly express their meaning to the most captious caviller, that no difference can possibly arise about the interpretation of them; or else (which will be more suitable to this wise hypothesis) till general councils (being convinced by Mr. S.'s demonstrations) shall come to understand themselves

* Append. c. 6.

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so well, as not to entrust their decrees any more to the uncertain way of writing; but for the future to communicate them to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And, to mention no more, Mr. Knott* (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain sense of Scripture is only to be had from the church) speaks to this purpose: That before we can be certain that this is the true sense of such a text, we must either be certain that this text is capable of no other sense; as figurative, mystical, or moral; or, if it be, we must have some certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then, by a fair parity of reason, before I can be certain that this is the sense of a doctrinal tradition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expressed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense (as figurative, mystical, or moral) besides that in which I understood them; or, if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of these other senses, then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken: and this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a text of Scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a traditionary doctrine may by different expressions be still further and further explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: for if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken, in any other sense; I say, if this

* Answer to Chillingworth, c. 2. sect. 6.

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cavil will hold, then every new expression, whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine, is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the sense of their traditional doctrines, than protestants may be of the sense of Scripture.

§. 12. These are his exceptions contained in his second discourse; and of what force they are hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these defects might in part be provided against by history, by the providence of God, by testimonies of councils and fathers, and by the sufficient clearness of Scripture as to the fundamentals; he endeavours to shew, that these signify little to this purpose.

First, Not "history,* because few are skilled in history; and they that are not cannot safely rely upon those that are skilled, unless they knew certainly that the historians whom they rely on had secure grounds, and not bare hearsay for what they wrote, and that they were not contradicted by others either extant or perished." How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled history by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of skill, I have already shewn. I shall only add now, that if this reasoning be true, it is impossible for any man to be certain by history of any ancient matter of fact, as namely, that there were such persons as Julius Cæsar and William the Conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England, because (according to him) we cannot know certainly that the historians who relate these things, and upon whose authority we rely, had se-

* P. 17, 18.

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cure grounds, and not bare hearsay, for what they wrote: and that they were not contradicted by others either extant or perished, is, I am sure, impossible for any man to know: for who can tell now what was contained in those books which are perished? So that if this be requisite to make every historical relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of those books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient fact or history: for who knows certainly that some books that are perished did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? Nay, if this reasoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition: for what though the priest tell me this was the doctrine of Christ delivered to him; unless I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his testimony: nor then neither, in Mr. Knott's* opinion, because "the testimony of preachers or pastors is human and fallible," unless (according to his jargon) a conclusion, deduced from premises, one of which is only probable, and may be sufficient to bring our understanding to an infallible act of faith, viz. if such a conclusion be taken specificative; whereas if it may be taken reduplicative, as it is a conclusion, it can only beget a probable assent; which is to say, that, considered barely as a conclusion, and so far as in reason it can deserve assent, it is only probable; but, considered as it serves an hypothesis, and is convenient to be believed with reason or without, so it is infallible. But to carry the supposition further: put the case, that the whole present age, assembled in a general council, should declare that

* Answ. to Chilling. c. 1. sect. 33.

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such a point was delivered to them; yet (according to Mr. S.) we cannot safely rely upon this, unless we knew certainly, that those whom they relied on had secure grounds, and not bare hearsay, for what they delivered; and that they were not contradicted within the space of fifteen hundred years by any of those that are dead; which is impossible for any one now to know.

But to shew how inconsistent he is with himself in these matters, I will present the reader with a passage or two in another part of his book, where he endeavours to prove that men may safely rely on a general and uncontrolled tradition. He tells us, "* That the common course of human conversation makes it madness not to believe great multitudes of knowers, if no possible considerations can awaken in our reason a doubt that they conspire to deceive us." And a little after, † "Nor can any, unless their brains rove wildly, or be unsettled even to the degree of madness, suspect deceit, where such multitudes agree unanimously in a matter of fact." Now if men be but supposed to write, as well as to speak, what they know, and to agree in their writings about matter of fact; then it will be the same "madness not to believe multitudes of historians, where no possible consideration can awaken in our reason a doubt that they have conspired to deceive us; and men's brains must rove wildly, and be unsettled even to the degree of frenzy, who suspect deceit where such multitudes unanimously agree in a matter of fact." And this seems to me to be the great unhappiness of Mr. S.'s demonstrations, that they proceed upon contradictory principles, so that in order to the demonstrating of the uncertainty of

* P. 49.

† Ibid.

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books and writings, he must suppose all those principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be self-evident and unquestionable, when he is to demonstrate the infallibility of oral tradition.

§. 13. Secondly, He tells us, * the providence of God is no security against those contingencies the Scriptures are subject to; because we cannot be certain of Divine providence or assistance to his church, but by letter of Scripture; therefore, that must first be proved certain, before we mention the church, or God's assistance to her. As if we pretended there was any promise in Scripture that God would preserve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwise be assured of it; as if the light of natural reason could not assure us of God's providence in general, and of his more especial care of those things which are of greatest concernment to us, such as this is, that a book containing the method and the terms of salvation should be preserved from any material corruption! He might as well have said, that without the letter of Scripture we cannot know that there is a God.

* P. 18.

§. 14. Thirdly, Nor (says he †) can testimonies of councils and fathers be sufficient interpreters of Scripture. We do not say they are. Our principle is, that the Scripture doth sufficiently interpret itself, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary to be believed and practised. And the general consent of fathers in this doctrine of the sufficient plainness of Scripture, (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good evidence against them. As for obscure and more doubtful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpreta-

† P. 18, 19.

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tion. And that the papists think so, as well as we, is plain: inasmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ among themselves in the interpretation of several texts: and nothing is more familiar in all popish commentators, than to differ from the ancient fathers about the sense of Scripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy (as I said before) do not think it necessary to believe that always to be the true sense of texts which councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm points of faith. Nay, if any controversy arise about the sense of any text of Scripture, it is impossible (according to Mr. Rushworth's principles) for a council to decide either that, or any other controversy: for he* makes it his business to prove, that controversies cannot be decided by words; and if this be so, then they cannot be decided at all, unless he can prove that they may be decided without words, and consequently that councils may do their work best in the quakers' way, by silent meetings.

* Dial. 2. sect. 8.

§. 15. Fourthly, "Nor can (says he *) the clearness of Scripture as to fundamentals be any help against these defects." Why not?

* P. 20, 21.

First, Because "a certain catalogue of fundamentals was never given and agreed to by sufficient authority, and yet without this all goes to wreck." I hope not, so long as we are sure that God would make nothing necessary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and so long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed, (which is every one's fault if he do not) men may do well enough without a precise catalogue. But suppose we say, that the articles of the apostles' creed contain all necessary

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matters of simple belief; what hath Mr. S. to say against this? I am sure the Roman catechism set forth by the decree of the council of Trent, says * as much as this comes to; viz. "That the apostles having received a command to preach the gospel to every creature, thought fit to compose a form of Christian faith; namely, to this end, that they might all think and speak the same things, and that there might be no schisms among those whom they had called to the unity of faith, but that they might all be perfect in the same sense and the same opinion: and this profession of the Christian faith and hope, so framed by them, the apostles called the symbol, or creed." Now how this end of bringing men to unity of faith, and making them perfectly of the same sense and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain all necessary points of simple belief, I can by no means understand. Besides, a certain catalogue of fundamentals is as necessary for them as for us; and when Mr. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had a great desire to have seen Mr. Knott's catalogue of fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that whenever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: but Mr. Knott, though he still persisted in the same demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a secret to his dying day. But, to put a final stop to this "canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals" (which yet I perceive I never shall be able to do, because it is one of those expletive topics which popish writers, especially those of the lowest form, do generally make use of to help out a book);

* Præfat.

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however, to do what I can towards the stopping of it, I desire Mr. S. to answer the reasons whereby his friend Dr. Holden * shews the unreasonableness of this demand, and likewise endeavours to prove, that such a catalogue would not only be useless and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifestly impossible to give such a precise catalogue.

* Analys. Fid. l. 1. c. 4.

Secondly, He asks, † "Is it a fundamental that Christ is God?" If so, "Whether this be clearer in Scripture, than that God hath hands, feet," &c. To which I answer by another question, Is it clear that there are figures in Scripture, and that many things are spoken after the manner of men, and by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities; and that custom and common sense teach men to distinguish between things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the Scripture saith God hath hands and feet, and that Christ is the vine and the door, these are not to be taken properly, as we take this proposition, that Christ is God, in which no man hath any reason to suspect a figure? When Mr. S. tells us, that he "percheth upon the specifical nature of things," would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence that Mr. S. believed himself to be a bird, and nature a perch? And yet not only the Scriptures, but all sober writers, are free from such forced and fantastical metaphors. I remember that Origen ‡ taxeth Celsus's wilful ignorance in finding fault with the Scriptures, for attributing to God human affections, as anger, &c. and tells him, "That any one who had a mind to understand the Scriptures, might easily

† P. 21.

‡ L. 4.

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see, that such expressions were accommodated to us, and accordingly to be understood; and that no man, that will but compare these expressions with other passages of Scripture, need to fail of the true sense of them." But, (according to Mr. S.) Origen was to blame to find fault with Celsus for thinking that the Scriptures did really attribute human affections to God; for how could he think otherwise, when the most fundamental point is not clearer in Scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.? How could Origen in reason expect from Celsus (though never so great a philosopher), that he should be able, without the help of oral tradition, to distinguish between what is spoken literally, and what by a certain scheme of speech? Theodoret * tells us of one Audæus, who held that God had a human shape, and bodily members; but he does not say that the reason of this error was because he made Scripture the rule of his faith, but expressly because "he was a fool, and did foolishly understand those things which the Divine Scriptures speak by way of condescension." So that, although Mr. S. is pleased to make this wise objection, yet it seems (according to Theodoret) that men do not mistake such texts either for want of oral tradition, or of sufficient clearness in the Scriptures, but for want of common reason and sense. And if Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is secure from all possibility of being mistaken by foolish and perverse men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its sake.

* Hæret. Fabul. l. 4.

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SECT. IV.

That Scripture is a sufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the most rational doubters.

§. 1. In his next discourse he endeavours to shew, that unlearned persons cannot be justified as acting rationally in receiving the Scripture for the word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule; because they are not capable of satisfaction concerning these matters. But I have already shewn that they are, and shall not repeat the same over again.

* P. 24. And whereas he says, * that "several professions all pretend to Scripture, and yet differ, and damn, and persecute one another" about these differences; the answer is easy: that they all pretend to Scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of God, and the rule of faith; and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident, in that those several professions acknowledge the articles contained in the apostles' creed to be sufficiently delivered in Scripture: and if any professions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure texts, the Scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

† P. 25—27. §. 2. And whereas he pretends, † that the Scripture is not "able to satisfy sceptical dissenters and rational doubters, because nothing under a demonstration can satisfy such persons so well concerning the incorruptedness of

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originals, the faithfulness of translations, &c. but that searching and sincere wits may still maintain their ground of suspense, with a—Might it not be otherwise?" This hath been answered already, partly by shewing that the Scripture was not intended to satisfy sceptics, and that a demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them; and partly by shewing that rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the thing will bear; and he is not a rational doubter that desires more.

But, that he may see the unreasonableness of this discourse, I shall briefly shew him, that all mankind do, in matters of this nature, accept of such evidence as falls short of demonstration; and that his great friends and masters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book, (though he manageth them to less advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of infallibility, and such evidence as is less than demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the antiquity and authors of several books, for which they have not demonstrative evidence? Doth not Aristotle say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no passages in books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied that this and no other is the certain sense of them? If there be none, can any thing be spoken in plainer words than it may be written? If it cannot, how can we be satisfied of the certain sense of any doctrine orally delivered? And if we cannot be so satisfied, where is the cer-

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tainty of oral tradition? But if books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied that this is the certain sense of such and such passages, then we may reasonably rest satisfied in evidence for these matters short of demonstration. For was ever the sense of any words so plain as that there did not remain this ground of suspense, that those words might be capable of another sense?

Mr. Rushworth * says, that "disputative scholars do find means daily to explicate the plainest words of an author to a quite different sense:" and, that the world might be furnished with an advantageous instance of the possibility of this, Raynaudus † (a writer of their own) hath made a wanton experiment upon the apostles' creed, and by a sinister (but possible) interpretation, hath made every article of it heresy and blasphemy, on purpose to shew that the plainest words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the apostles, and can deliver the Christian doctrine so clearly, that he can demonstrate it impossible for any man to put any other sense upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done; but if Mr. S. doth this, he must both amend his style and his way of demonstration.

* Dial. 2. sect. 7.

† De bonis et malis. Libris.

Is Mr. S. sufficiently assured that there is such a part of the world as America? and can he demonstrate this to any man without carrying him thither? Can he shew, by any necessary argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the relations concerning that place should be false? When his demonstrations have done their utmost, cannot† "a searching and sincere wit at least maintain his ground of suspense, with a—Might it not

† P. 27.

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be otherwise?" And, with an—Is it not possible that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have more use of their privilege to abuse the world by false reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all those who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to some other parts of the world, and taking pleasure in abusing others in the same manner as they have been imposed upon themselves, may say they have been at America? Who can tell but all this may be so? And yet, I suppose, notwithstanding the possibility of this, no man in his wits is now possessed with so incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be such a place. The case is the very same as to the certainty of an ancient book, and of the sense of plain expressions: we have no demonstration for these things, and we expect none, because we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain that any book is so ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whose name it bears, or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it; it is possible all this may be otherwise, that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well assured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any just cause to make the least doubt of it. For a bare possibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no just cause of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is possible all the people of France may die this night; but I hope the possibility of this doth not incline any man in the least to think it will be so: it is possible that the sun may not rise to-morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I suppose that no man hath the least doubt but that it will.

§. 3. But because this principle, viz. "That in

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matters of religion, a man cannot be reasonably satisfied with any thing less than that infallible assurance which is wrought by demonstration," is the main pillar of Mr. S.'s book; therefore, beside what hath been already said to shew the unreasonableness of this principle, I shall take a little pains to manifest to him how much he is contradicted in this, by the chief of his brethren of the tradition: viz. Mr. Rushworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Cressy, and Mr. White, who, besides Mr. S. and one J. B. are, so far as I can learn, all the public patrons that ever this hypothesis of oral tradition hath had in the world; and if Mr. White, as I have reason to believe, was the author of those Dialogues which pass under Rushworth's name, the number of them is yet less. Now if I can shew that this principle, esteemed by Mr. S. so fundamental to this hypothesis, is plainly contradicted by the principal assertors of oral tradition, I shall hereby gain one of these two things—either that these great patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypothesis, or that this principle is not necessary for the support of it. Not that I would be so understood, as if I did deny that these very persons do sometimes speak very big words of the necessity of infallibility: but if it be their pleasure to contradict themselves, as I have no reason to be displeased, so neither to be concerned for it; but shall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them first to themselves, and then, if he pleases, afterwards to himself.

§. 4. I begin with Mr. Rushworth, of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his to persuade the world, that, notwithstanding he was the first inventor of this hypothesis of oral tradition, yet he could prove that the church had, in all ages, owned

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it, and proceeded upon it, as her only rule of faith. He, in his Third Dialogue,* when his nephew objects to him, that "perhaps a protestant would say that all his foregoing discourse was but probability and likelihood; and, therefore, to hazard a man's estate upon peradventures, were something hard, and not very rationally done:" replies thus to him, "What security do your merchants, your statesmen, your soldiers, those that go to law, nay, even those that till your grounds, and work for their livings; what security, I say, do all these go upon? Is it greater than the security which these grounds afford? Surely, no; and yet no man esteems them foolish. All human affairs are hazardous, and have some adventure in them: and, therefore, he who requires evident certainty only in matters of religion, discovers in himself a less mind to the goods promised in the next life, than to these which he seeks here in this world, upon weaker assurance. Howsoever, the greatest evidence that can be to him that is not capable of convincing demonstrations, (which the greatest part of mankind fall short of) is but conjectural." So that, according to Mr. Rushworth, it is not reason and discretion, but want of love to God and religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of religion, than for human affairs, which yet, he tells us, are "hazardous, and have some adventure in them," and, consequently, are not capable of demonstration. Besides, if demonstrative evidence be an essential property of the rule of faith, as Mr. S. affirms, then this rule cannot, according to Mr. Rushworth, be of any use to the greatest part of mankind, because they are "not capable of convincing demonstrations." Again, "Do but con-

* Sect. 3. and 4.

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sider (says he*) how unequal and unjust a condition it is, that the claim of the present church shall not be heard, unless she can confute all the peradventures that wit may invent, and solve all the arguments which the infinite variety of time, place, and occasions, may have given way unto; and then you will see how unreasonable an adversary he is, who will not be content with any satisfaction, but such as man's nature scarcely affords." And is it not equally unjust in Mr. S. not to let Scripture's "claim be heard, unless we can confute every peradventure (and—Might it not be otherwise) that wit may invent?" See, then, how unreasonable an adversary Mr. S. is, "who will not be content with any satisfaction, but such as (according to Mr. Rushworth) man's nature scarcely affords."

* Ib. sect. 6.

Dr. Holden, I confess, states the matter somewhat cautiously, when he tells us, † "That it shall suffice, for the present, to determine, that the wisdom of the Creator hath afforded us such an assurance, especially of truths necessary to salvation, as is suitable to our nature, and best fitted for the safe conduct of our lives in moral and religious affairs." But if we interpret these general expressions by the passages I before cited out of Mr. Rushworth, (as in reason we may, since the Doctor is beholden to him for the best part of his book) then nothing can make more against Mr. S.'s principle.

† L. 1. c. 1.

§. 5. Mr. Cressy, in his Exomologesis,‡ says, "That such teachers as approached nearest to the fountain of truth, Christ and his apostles, had means of informing themselves in apostolical tradition, incomparably beyond us." Mr. S.

‡ C. 19. sect. 5.

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may do well to shew what those means were which are so incomparably beyond his infallibility and demonstration. The same author * does very much applaud Stapleton's determination of the question concerning the church's infallibility, which is as follows: "That the church does not expect to be taught by God immediately by new revelations, but makes use of several means, &c. as being governed not by apostles, &c. but by ordinary pastors and teachers. That these pastors, in making use of these several means of decision, proceed not as the apostles did, with a peculiar infallible direction of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential collection not always necessary. That to the apostles, who were the first masters of evangelical faith, and founders of the church, such an infallible certitude of means was necessary; not so now to the church," &c. If this be true, "that an infallible certitude of means is not now necessary to the church;" and that her pastors do now, in deciding matters of faith, proceed only with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem that "a searching wit may maintain his ground and suspense," even against the church also, with a "Might it not be otherwise?" Again, Mr. Cressy † tells us, "That truth, and our obligation to believe it, is in a higher degree in Scripture, than in the decisions of the church," as Bellarmine acknowledges; which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contained in the Scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine from the determination of the church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of truths delivered to us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him what

* C. 32. sect. 4.

† Append. c. 5.

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that higher degree of assurance is which Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that, (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that Mr. Cressy, by his approbation of this determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the Scripture above the church, as to one of the most essential properties of the rule of faith, viz. the certainty of it.

But the most eminent testimony to my purpose in Mr. Cressy, is that famous passage,* (which hath given so much offence to several of his own church) wherein he acknowledges the unfortunateness (to him) of the word *infallibility*, and tells us,—That he could find no such word in any council; that no necessity appeared to him, that either he or any other protestant should ever have heard that word named, and much less pressed, with so much earnestness as of late it has generally been, in disputations and books of controversy; and that Mr. Chillingworth combats this word with too great success, insomuch, that if this word were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chillingworth's arguments would lose the greatest part of their strength; and, that if this word were confined to the schools where it was bred, there would be still no inconvenience: and, that since by manifest experience the English protestants think themselves so secure, when they have leave to stand or fall by that word, and in very deed have so much to say for themselves when they are pressed unnecessarily with it: since likewise it is a word capable of so high a sense that we cannot devise one more full and proper to attribute to God himself, &c. since all this is so, he thinks he cannot be blamed, if such reasons move him to wish that the protest-

* C. 40. sect. 3. &c.

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ants may never be invited to combat the authority of the church under that notion.—A very ingenuous acknowledgment! and as cross to Mr. S.'s principle as any thing can be. But the word infallibility was not so unfortunate to Mr. Cressy, as his untoward explication of the forecited passage in his Appendix, which he afterwards published chiefly by way of vindication of himself against the learned author of the preface to my Lord Falkland's discourse of Infallibility. There he* tells us, That there are "several degrees of infallibility." And that we may know what degrees of infallibility he thinks necessary to be attributed to the church, this following passage will inform us: "Methinks (he says) if God have furnished his Divine and supernatural truth with evidence equal to this, the sun will shine to-morrow, or that there will be a spring and harvest next year, we are infinitely obliged to bless his providence, and justly condemned, if we refuse to believe the least of such truths, as shewing less affection to save our souls, than the dull ploughmen to sow their corn, who certainly have far less evidence for their harvest than catholics for their faith; and yet they insist not peevishly upon every capricious objection, nor exact an infallible security of a plentiful reaping next summer; but, notwithstanding all difficulties and contingencies, proceed cheerfully in their painful husbandry." So that, according to this discourse, whatever degree of assurance the church hath, or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain that no further degree is necessary, than what the husbandman, when he sows, hath of a plentiful harvest, and that men are justly condemned if they refuse to believe the least truth upon such security, which yet (by his own acknowledg-

* Append. sect. 2. and 3.

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ment) is liable to contingencies: may, further, that men are not reasonable, but peevish, in exacting infallible security, and insisting upon every capricious objection, such as is Mr. S.'s "Might it not be otherwise?" Now as to this degree of assurance, (or, as he calls it, infallibility,) I cannot but grant what he says of it to be most true, viz. that in a severe acceptation of the word it is not rigorously infallible, that is, (as he explains) it is not absolutely impossible, nor does it imply a flat contradiction, that the thing whereof we are so assured may be otherwise: but then I utterly deny, that, according to any true acceptation of this word, such a degree of assurance as he speaks of can be called infallibility; and withal I affirm, that none of those several degrees of infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an absolute impossibility, can, with any tolerable propriety of speech, or regard to the true meaning and use of the word, have the name of infallibility given to them. For infallibility can signify nothing else but an utter impossibility that one should be deceived in that matter as to which he is supposed to be infallible; and to say, such a thing is impossible, is to say, that the existence of it implies a flat contradiction: so that whosoever asserts degrees of infallibility, is obliged to shew that there are degrees of absolute impossibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he had need of a very sharp and piercing wit, that is to find out degrees where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in respect of the objects of knowledge, it is easy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to more objects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance (of which Mr. Cressy speaks), it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of

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all possibility of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all possibility of being deceived; and whosoever is less than this is not infallible, because he only is so who is out of all possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible: so that Mr. Cressy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no degrees), but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been that, by the means of such a cloud, he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamours of his own church, and the advantage which his adversaries made of his free and open discourse against infallibility: for any one that carefully reads his book, will find that he understands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but an authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her decisions, which is no more but what every supreme civil judge hath in matters, viz. a power to determine those controversies that lie before him as well as he can or will, and when that is done every one is bound to submit to such determinations; but yet, for all this, no man ever dreamt a supreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the church's authority: but if she have no other infallibility but what a full authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and disingenuous he is in ex-

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plaining the meaning of these words of his own, [viz. "Against this word infallibility, Mr. Chillingworth's book especially combats, and this with too great success,"] which in his Appendix* he interprets thus; "Success, I mean, not against the church, but against his own soul, and the souls of his fellow English protestants," &c. As if one that had wished well to Cæsar should have said, "That Pompey had fought against him with too great success;" and being afterwards challenged by Cæsar's party, as having said that Pompey had conquered Cæsar, he should explain himself thus, "Success, I mean, not against Cæsar, but against his own life, and the lives of his followers." Can any thing be finer, than for any man to say, that, by Pompey's success in fighting against Cæsar, he means that Cæsar had beaten Pompey? Which is no more than if any one should take the liberty to interpret white by black.

* C. 5. sect. 6.

§. 6. Lastly, Mr. White doth most expressly contradict this principle of Mr. S.'s in these following passages. In his preface to Mr. Rushworth he says, "That such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckoned in the degree of true certainty;" and that those authors are mistaken who undervalue it. So that it seems, Mr. S. is mistaken in affirming that a man cannot be certain of any thing so long as there is any possibility that it may be otherwise. In his answer to my Lord Falkland, he says, * that "in moral matters, and such as are subject to human action, we must expect such assurance as human actions bear. If for the government of your spiritual life you have as

* P. 14, 15.

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much as for the management of your natural and civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three witnesses of men beyond exception will cast a man out of not only his lands, but life and all. He that among merchants will not adventure where there is a hundred to one of gaining, will be accounted a silly factor: and among soldiers, he that will fear danger where but one of a hundred is slain, shall not escape the stain of cowardice. What, then, shall we expect in religion, but to see a main advantage on the one side, which we may rest ourselves on? And for the rest, remember we are men subject to chance and mutability, and thank God he hath given us that assurance in a supernatural way, which we are contented withal in our civil ventures and possessions, which nevertheless, God knoweth, we often love better, and would hazard less, than the unknown good of the life to come."

Again, * "If God Almighty hath in all sorts and manners provided his church that she may enlighten every man in his way that goeth the way of a man, then let every man consider which is the fit way for himself, and what in other matters of that way he accounteth evidence. And if there be no interest in his soul to make him loath to believe, what in another matter of the like nature he doth not stick at, or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I fear not his choice." Once more; directing a man in his search after rational satisfaction in matters of religion, he hath this passage: † "Besides this, he must have this care, that he seek what the nature of the subject can yield; and not as those physicians, who, when they have promised no less than immortality, can at last only reach to some conservation of

* P. 30.

† P. 46.

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health or youth in some small degree: so I could wish the author to well assure himself first that there is possibly an infallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented with nothing less; for what if human nature should not be capable of so great a good? Would he therefore think it fitting to live without any religion, because he could not get such an one as himself desired, though with more than a man's wish? Were it not rational to see, whether among religions some one have not such notable advantages over the rest, as in reason it might seem human nature might be contented withal? Let him cast his account with the dearest things he hath, his own or friends' lives, his estate, his hope of posterity, and see upon what terms of advantage he is ready to venture all these; and then return to religion, and see whether, if he do not venture his soul upon the like, it be truly reason, or some other not confessed motive, which withdraws him. For my own part, as I doubt not of an infallibility, so I doubt not but, setting that aside, there be those excellences found on the catholic party which may force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath upon it, before all other religions and sects in the world. Why, then, may not one who after long searching findeth no infallibility, rest himself on the like, supposing man's nature affords no better?"

Are not these fair concessions, which the evidence and force of truth have extorted from these authors? So that it seems that that which Mr. S. calls * "a civil piece of atheistry," is advanced in most express words by his best friends; and therefore, I hope he will (as he threatens me) "be smart with them in opposition to so damnable and fundamental an error." And

* Letter to his Answerer, p. 5.

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whenever he attempts this, I would entreat him to remember that he hath these two things to prove: First, That no evidence but demonstration can give a man sufficient assurance of any thing. Secondly, That a bare possibility that a thing may be otherwise, is a rational cause of doubting, and a wise ground of suspense:—which, when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him his infallibility.

SECT. V.

That Scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute adversaries, and that it is sufficiently certain.

§. 1. THE last part of this third discourse endeavours to shew, "that the Scripture is not convictive of the most obstinate and acute adversaries." As for the obstinate, he knows my mind already. Let us see why "the most acute adversary" may not be convinced by Scripture: because, as he objects, * First, We cannot be certain that this book is God's word, because of the "many strange absurdities and heresies in the open letter as it lies, as that God hath hands and feet," &c. and because "of the contradictions in it:" to which I have already returned an answer. Secondly, Because (as he saith †) we cannot be "certain of the truth of the letter in any particular text, that it was not foisted in, or some way altered in its significativeness; and if it be a negative proposition, that the particle *not* was not inserted; if affirmative, not left out." And if we pretend to be certain of this, he demands ‡ our demonstration for it. But how unreasonable this demand is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it

* P. 28.

† P. 31.

‡ P. 31.

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yet further, I ask him, how their church knows, that the particle *not* was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready answer, viz. by oral tradition. But this (according to him) * only reaches to "Scripture's letter so far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine;" concerning the rest of Scripture it is impossible (according to his own principles) that they should have any security that the particle *not* was not unduly inserted, or left out by the transcribers. Nay, as to those texts of Scripture which fall in with the main body of Christian doctrine, I demand his demonstration that the particle *not* was not unduly inserted or left out, not only in those texts, but also in the oral tradition of the doctrines coincident with the sense of those texts. If he say, it was impossible any age should conspire to leave out or insert the particle *not* in the oral tradition; so, say I, it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the written text: but then, I differ from him thus far—that I do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can rigorously be demonstrated, but only morally impossible, so that nobody hath any reason to doubt of it; which to a prudent man is as good as a demonstration. Pyrrho himself never advanced any principle of scepticism beyond *this*, viz. That men ought to question the credit of all books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as to every sentence in them, that the particle *not* was not inserted (if it be negative), or left out (if it be affirmative). If so much be required to free a man from reasonable doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that have attained to infallibility! What he saith concerning the *variæ lectiones*

* P. 116.

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* of Scripture, hath already had a sufficient answer. * P. 38.

§. 2. In his fourth discourse he endeavours to shew, † that the Scripture "is not certain in itself," and consequently, "not ascertained to us." First, "Not certain, materially considered, ‡ as consisting of such and such characters, because books are liable to be burnt, torn, blotted, worn out." We grant it is not impossible but that any, or all the books in the world, may be burnt: but then we say, likewise, that a book so universally dispersed may easily be preserved; though we have no assurance that God will preserve it, in case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour or suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the Scripture cannot be a rule of faith, if they be liable to any external accidents: and this (he tells us) § "Though it may seem a remote and impertinent exception, yet, to one who considers the wise dispositions of Divine Providence, it will deserve a deep consideration; because the salvation of mankind being the end of God's making nature, the means to it should be more settled, strong, and unalterable, than any other piece of nature whatever." But notwithstanding this wise reason, this exception still seems to me both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls a reason be a truth, it will from thence necessarily follow, not only that the doctrine of Christ must be conveyed by such a means as is more unalterable than the course of nature, but also, by a clear parity of reason, that all the means of our salvation do operate towards the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the sun shines; which they can

† P. 33.

‡ P. 34.

§ P. 34.

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never do, unless they operate more necessarily than any natural causes; how they can do so upon voluntary agents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§. 3. He proceeds, by a long harangue, to shew,* that not only these material characters in themselves are corruptible, but, "in complexion with the causes, actually laid in the world to preserve them entire; because either those causes are material, and then they are also liable to continual alterations; or spiritual, that is, the minds of men, and from these we may with good reason hope for a greater degree of constancy than from any other piece of nature;" which, by the way, is a very strange paradox, that the actions of voluntary agents have a greater certainty and constancy in them than those of natural agents; of which the fall of angels and men, compared with the continuance of the sun and stars in their first state, is a very good evidence.

* P. 34.

§. 4. But he adds a caution,† "That they are perfectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable, if due circumstances be observed, that is, if due proposals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care used to attend to such proposals." But who can warrant, that due proposals will always be made to men, and due care used by them; if these be uncertain, where is the constancy and unerrableness he talks so much of? So that, notwithstanding the constancy of this spiritual cause (the mind of man) of preserving Scriptures entire, yet, in order to this, (as he tells us‡) "so many actions are to be done, which are compounded and made up of an innumerable multitude of several particulars to be observed, every of which may be mistaken apart,

† P. 35.

‡ P. 36.

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each being a distinct little action, in its single self, such as is the transcribing of a whole book, consisting of such myriads of words, single letters, and tittles, or stops; and the several actions of writing over each of these so short and cursory, that it prevents diligence, and exceeds human care, to keep awake and apply distinct attentions to every of these distinct actions." Mr. Rushworth* much outdoes Mr. S. in these minute cavils, for he tells us, that "supposing an original copy of Christ's words, written by one of the evangelists in the same language, let him have set down every word and syllable: yet men conversant in noting the changes of meanings in words will tell us, that divers accents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the speaker's head or body this or that way, &c. may so change the sense of the words, that they will seem quite different in writing from what they were in speaking." I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been careful to preserve all these circumstances, and hath delivered down Christ's doctrine with all the right traditionary accents, nods, and gestures, necessary for the understanding of it, otherwise the omission of these may have so altered the sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. S. we do not pretend to be assured that it is naturally impossible that the Scripture should have been corrupted or changed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good arguments as the nature of the subject will bear. But if his reason had not been very short and cursory, he might easily have reflected, that oral tradition is equally liable to all these contingencies; for it doth as much "pre-

* Dial. 2. sec. 7.

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vent diligence, and exceed human care, to keep awake and apply distinct attentions to the distinct actions of speaking, as of writing." And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered, consists of words, and letters, and accents, and stops, as well as a doctrine written: and that the several actions of speaking are as short and cursory as of writing.

* P. 38. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

§. 5. Secondly, He tells us,* "Scripture, formally considered, as to its significativeness, is also uncertain;" First,† "Because of the uncertainty of the letter:" this is already answered: Secondly,‡ "Because the certain sense of it is not to be arrived to by the vulgar, who are destitute of languages and arts." True, where men are not permitted to have the Scriptures in their own language, and understand no other: but where they are allowed the Scriptures translated into their own language, they may understand them; all necessary points of faith and practice being sufficiently plain in any translation of the Bible that I know of. And that § eminent wits cannot agree about the sense of texts which concern the main points of faith, hath been spoken to already.

§. 6. As for the reverence he pretends to Scripture in the conclusion of his fourth discourse, he might have spared that, after all the raillery and rudeness he hath used against it. It is easy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expressions concerning them, what his esteem is of those sacred oracles. Probably it was requisite in prudence to cast in a few good words concerning the Scriptures, for the sake of the more tender and squeamish novices of their religion, or (as Mr.

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Rushworth's nephew* says frankly and openly) "for the satisfaction of indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture;" who it seems are not yet attained to that degree of catholic piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently that the word of God should be reviled or slighted. Besides that, in reference to those whom they hope hereafter to convert, (who might be too much alienated from their religion, if he had expressed nothing but contempt towards a book, which protestants and Christians in all ages, till the very dregs of popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of) it was not much amiss to pass this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wise of his religion will easily understand, and may serve to catch the rest. But let him not deceive himself, "God is not mocked."

* Dial. 2. sec. 14.

SECT. VI.

§. 1. SECONDLY, He comes to shew,† "That the properties of a rule of faith belong to oral tradition." And, First, He gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition, which amounts to this: that as, in reference to the civil education of children, "they are taught their own and others' names, to write and read, and exercise their trades;" so, in reference to religion, the children of Christians "first hear sounds, afterwards by degrees get dim notions of God, Christ, Saviour, heaven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees practise what they have heard; they are shewn to say grace, and their prayers, to hold up their hands, or per-

That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.

† P. 41.

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haps eyes, and to kneel, and other postures." Afterwards they are acquainted with the "Creed, Ten Commandments, and sacraments, some common forms of prayer, and other practices of Christianity, and are directed to order their lives accordingly, and are guided in all this by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful; and this goes on by insensible degrees, not by leaps from a hundred years to a hundred, but from month to month, and even less." If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among protestants, and that with greater advantage; because we always teach children to say their prayers in a known tongue; so as they may understand them. And we also teach them the Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the sacraments, so many as Christ hath instituted, and no more. So that if this be so infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of Christianity, we have it among us: and we do over and besides instruct them in the Scriptures, which are the authentic instrument whereby Christ's doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not suppose (as his hypothesis necessarily enforceth him to do) that the Christian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by some more, by others less perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and dispositions of children; whereas his hypothesis falls, if all or at least the generality of parents, do not instruct their children with the like exactness, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the same perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed, and these variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us

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how all parents do teach their children the whole body of Christ's doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thousand several expressions signifying the same sense, and not have instanced in two set forms, such as the Creed and Ten Commandments; for, according to Mr. White, * "That cannot be a tradition which is delivered down in set words."

* Apolog. p. 81.

§. 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to shew that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already shewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two; viz. That it be plain and intelligible, and that it be sufficiently certain. The first of these, that oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him: all the difficulty is about the second property, whether we have sufficient assurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition, hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance: and all that he pretends to prove in this discourse, is, That if this rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the Christian doctrine neither hath, nor can have, received any change; that is, if the next age after the apostles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the Christian doctrine to their immediate successors, and they to theirs, and so on, then, upon this supposition, the doctrine of the present traditionary church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any deviation from it (as he pretends,) this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the most absurd propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative evidence.

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PART III.

In which Mr. S.'s Demonstrations and Corollaries are examined.

SECT. I.

Considerations touching his demonstrations in general.

§. 1. BEFORE I come to speak particularly to his demonstrations, I shall premise these two considerations: First, That (according to the principle of the patrons of tradition) no man can, by his private reason, certainly find out the true rule of faith: Secondly, That (according to Mr. S.) the way of demonstration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of these be made out, his demonstrations lose all their force. If the first be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, nor, consequently, that that is the rule of faith: if the second, then the way of demonstration which he pretends to take, signifies nothing.

§. 2. First, No man can (according to the principles of the patrons of tradition) by his private reason, certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppose a heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the Christian faith; in order to which he is inquisitive after some rule by which he may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he inquires of Christians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it, some saying that the Scripture, others that oral tradition, is the rule. In this case it is not possible (without a revelation) for

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this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his reason demonstrate that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For, speaking of demonstrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, * "That tradition hath for its basis man's nature, not according to his intellectuals, which do but darkly grope in the pursuit of science," &c. And again,† speaking how reason brings men to the rule of faith, he uses this comparison: "she is like a dim-sighted man, who used his reason to find a trusty friend to lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his guidance rationally without using his own reason at all about the way itself." So that (according to him) the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of tradition, because that faculty which is dim-sighted, and "does but grope darkly in the pursuit of science," is incapable of framing demonstrations. Nor can any man understand how dim-sighted reason should see clearly to choose its guide any more than its way, especially if it be considered what a pretty contradiction it is, to say that reason, as it is dim-sighted, can see clearly.

* P. 55.

† Append. 2d. p. 183.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every man's reason dim-sighted; he ventures a step fur-

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ther, and calls it hoodwinked and blind: for he tells us,* "That private reason is apparently a most fallible guide;" and he pities† my Lord Falkland's case, because, in the search of the true religion, he did "betake himself to the casual conduct of blind, human, natural reason," which afterwards he calls a‡ "guide that two persons cannot possibly follow together, because no two persons (that ever followed any other guide beside authority) did or could think all things to be reasonable that all others thought so;" and, by consequence, "such a guide that as long as he continues in that office, there cannot possibly be any church any where: which (says he) is an infallible eviction that this is an imaginary seducing guide, since it is impossible that that should be a guide appointed for any Christian, which neither Christ nor his apostles, nor any of their followers, ever mentioned, yea, which formally destroys one of our twelve articles of the apostles' creed, viz. 'I believe the holy catholic church.'" Thus he does by reason clearly and infallibly evince, that reason cannot be otherwise than a most blind and fallible guide. This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one side of them, as if, because reason has a blind side, and is uncertain in some things, therefore we ought to conclude her universally blind and uncertain in every thing; and as if, because all men cannot think all things reasonable which any one man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common principles of reason be true, which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Cressy speaks here of the use of our private reason in the finding out of our rule,

* Appendix, c. 6. sect. 8.

† Ib. sect. 9.

‡ Ib. sect. 11.

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is clear from what he says in the next section, viz. "That this hoodwinked guide (inquiring into Scripture, and searching after tradition) may possibly stumble upon the way of unity and truth, that is, the true catholic church." If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend that he can by reason demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hoodwinked guide lead men to the true rule of faith? And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquisitive philosopher, (who knowing no other guide but his reason, whereby to find out whether Scripture or tradition be the true rule) to tell him that, by the help of his hoodwinked guide, he might possibly stumble upon the right!

A man may justly stand amazed at the inconsistency of these men's discourses and principles. In one mood they are all for demonstration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect science, which is the true rule of faith: but then again, when another fit takes them, there is no such thing as science, human reason grows all on the sudden dim-sighted, and at the next word is struck stark-blind; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive person to the rule of faith, is to leave him in a possibility of stumbling upon it; but if he be a heretic that makes use of private reason for his guide, then* "it is impossible but that he with his blind guide shall fall into the pit." I cannot, for my part, imagine how they can reconcile the blindness of human reason with all that noise which they make about science and demonstration; but this I must confess, that these kinds of discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper arguments to persuade

* Appendix, c. 7. sect. 8.

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a man of the blindness of human reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. Cressy, which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters, where he tells us,* "That the wit and judgment of catholics is to renounce their own judgment, and depose their own wit." Now he that professes to have done this, may write contradictions, and nobody ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that when he forsook our church and turned papist, he laid aside his judgment and wit; which is just such an heroic act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery to shew his liberty, would sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand from an experienced person, what charges a man must be at when he turns Roman catholic; namely, that whoever will embrace that religion must forfeit his reason.

* Appendix, c. 7. sect. 8.

§. 3. Secondly, The way of demonstration is (according to Mr. S.) no certain way to find out the rule of faith. In his 4th appendix† against my Lord of Down, one of the eight mines (as he calls them) which he lays to blow up my Lord's Dissuasive against Popery, is this: "That the method he takes in dissuading cannot be held in reason to have power to dissuade, unless it be proper to that effect, that is, not common to that effect and a contrary one. Now, that being most evidently no method or way to such an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect; it is plain to common sense, that my Lord of Down miscalls his book a Dissuasive, and that it can have in it no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can first vouch some particularity in the method he takes, above

† P. 253, 254.

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what is in others in which we experience miscarriage," &c. If this be true, then his method of demonstration is no way to make men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate, because that is "most evidently no way to an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect;" so that "it is plain to common sense" that Mr. S.'s demonstrations "can have in them no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can vouch some particularity" in the demonstrations he pretends to bring, above what is in other pretended demonstrations "in which we experience miscarriage." Do not Thomas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells us*) all along pretend to demonstrate? And yet it is generally believed that (at least where they contradict one another) one of them failed in his demonstrations. Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have demonstrated that a man at one jump might leap from London to Rome? And yet I do not think any one was ever satisfied with his demonstrations. And Mr. S. knows one in the world (whom I will not name, because he hath since ingenuously acknowledged his error) who thought he had demonstrated the quadrature of the circle; and was so confident of it, as to venture the reputation of his demonstrations in divinity upon it, and some of those divinity demonstrations were the very same with Mr. S.'s. Since therefore the world hath experienced so much miscarriage in the way of demonstration; before Mr. S.'s demonstrations can be allowed to signify any thing, he must (according to his own law) "vouch some particularity" in his way and method of demonstration above what is in other men's. He hath not any where (that I remember) told us what that particu-

* Exetasis, p. 24.

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larity is, wherein his way of demonstration is above other men's: nor can I, upon the most diligent search, find any peculiar advantage that his way has more than theirs above-mentioned, unless this be one, that he pretends to demonstrate a self-evident principle; and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and, unless this may be counted another advantage, that he has so extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonstrations; and in this particular, I must acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him; in all other things his way of demonstration is but like his neighbours.

SECT. II.

Mr. S.'s demonstration *a priori*.

§. 1. I COME now to examine his demonstrations of this self-evident principle (as he often calls it), that oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying Christ's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to say, that it is impossible but that this rule should always have been kept to. That this is not a self-evident principle, needs no other evidence than that he goes about to demonstrate it. But yet, notwithstanding this, I think he hath as much reason to call this a self-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonstrations.

§. 2. In order to his demonstration *a priori*, he lays* these four grounds, which I shall set down in his own words: "First, That Christian doctrine was at first unanimously settled by the apostles, in the hearts of the faithful, dispersed in great multitudes over several parts of the world.

* P. 59, 60.

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Secondly, That this doctrine was firmly believed by all those faithful to be the way to heaven, and the contradicting or deserting it to be the way to damnation: so that the greatest hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the Divine authority, strongly applied to the minds of the first believers, encouraging them to the adhering to that doctrine, and deterring them from relinquishing it; and, indeed, infinitely greater than any other whatever, springing from any temporal consideration: and that this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful. Thirdly, That hopes of good and fears of harm strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. Fourthly, That the thing was feasible or within their power: that what they were bred to was knowable by them. This put, it follows as certainly, that a great number or body of the first believers, and after faithful in each age, that is, from age to age, would continue to hold themselves, and teach their children as themselves had been taught, that is, would follow and stick to tradition; as it doth, that a cause put actually causing produceth its effect." This is his demonstration, with the grounds of it.

§. 3. To shew the vanity and weakness of this pretended demonstration, I shall assail it these three ways, by shewing: First, That if the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. Secondly, That his main grounds are apparently false. Thirdly, That his demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

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SECT. III.

The first answer to this demonstration.

§. 1. If the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two principles be true, "that the greatest hopes and fears are strongly applied to the minds of all Christians; and that those hopes and fears strongly applied are the cause of actual will to adhere constantly to Christ's doctrine;" then, from hence it follows, that none that entertain this doctrine can ever fall from it, because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it: for supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, those who entertain it must actually will to adhere to it, because "a cause put actually causing produceth its effect," which is constant adherence to it. And if this were true, these two things would be impossible: First, That any Christian should turn apostate or heretic; Secondly, That any Christian should live wickedly: both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant *de facto* to have been.

§. 2. First, It would be impossible that any Christian should turn apostate or heretic. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us,* "That the first renouncers of tradition must have been true believers or holders of it ere they renounced it;" and I suppose there is the

* P. 60.

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same reason for apostates. But if all Christians or true believers (as he calls them) have these arguments of hope and fear strongly applied, and hope and fear strongly applied be the cause of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; it is necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either apostates or heretics. For if these causes be put in "all the faithful actually causing (as the grounds of his demonstration suppose), and indefectibleness be the proper and necessary effect of these causes," as he also saith, * then it is impossible, that, where these causes are put, there should be any defection: for a proper and necessary effect cannot but be where the causes of such an effect are put, especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently, it is impossible that any single Christian should ever either totally apostatize or fall into heresy, that is, renounce tradition.

* P. 75.

§. 3. And that this is a genuine consequence from these principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruin his demonstration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his discourse. For he tells us, † "That it exceeds all the power of nature (abstracting from the causes of madness and violent disease) to blot the knowledge of this doctrine out of the soul of one single believer;" and ‡ that "since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing it doth so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man." And, § that "it is, perhaps, impossible for one single man

† P. 54.

‡ P. 78.

§ P. 89.

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to attempt to deceive posterity" by renouncing tradition. Which passages laid together amount to thus much: that it is impossible that tradition should fail in any one single person. And though in the passage last cited he speaks faintly, and with a *perhaps*, as if he apprehended some danger in speaking too peremptorily, yet any one will easily see the last to be as impossible as any of the rest. And he himself elsewhere, being in the full career of his bombast rhetoric, delivers it roundly without fear or wit:* "Sooner may the sinews of entire nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her activity and motion, that is, herself, than one single part of that innumerable multitude which integrate that vast testification which we call tradition, can possibly be violated."

* P. 54.

§. 4. But, it may be, we deal too hardly with *him*, and press his demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the generality of Christians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a demonstration that would have concluded no more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of Christians. A clear evidence that it is no demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, that there can be no apostates or heretics. Besides, supposing his demonstration to conclude only that the generality of Christians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to history. St. Jerome tells us,† that Liberius, bishop of Rome (for all "his particular title to infallibility built upon tradition," as Mr. S. speaks,

† Chron. ad Annum Christ. 352.

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coroll. 28.) turned Arian. And that * "Arianism was established by the synod of Ariminum," which was a council more general than that of Trent. And that † "almost all the churches in the whole world under the names of peace and of the emperor, were polluted by communion with the Arians." Again, that ‡ "under the Emperor Constantius (Eusebius and Hippatius being consuls) infidelity was subscribed under the names of unity and faith." And, § "that the whole world groaned, and wondered to see itself turned Arian." And he ‖ uses this as an argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the church those who had been defiled with the heresy of Arius, because the number of those who had kept themselves orthodox was exceeding small: "For (says he) the synod of Nice, which consisted of above three hundred bishops, received eight Arian bishops, whom they might have cast out without any great loss to the church. I wonder, then, how some, and those the followers of the Nicene faith, can think that three confessors (viz. Athanasius, Hilarius, Eusebius) ought not to do that in case of necessity, for the good and safety of the whole world, which so many and so excellent persons did voluntarily." It seems Arianism had prevailed very far, when St. Jerome could not name above three eminent persons in the church who had preserved themselves untainted with it. Again, ¶ "Arius in Alexandria was at first but one spark; but because it was not presently extinguished, it broke out into a flame which devoured the whole world." Gregory Nazianzen* likewise tells us to the same pur-

* Ad An. 365.

† Ad An. 364.

‡ Advers. Luciferum.

§ Ibid.

‖ Ibid.

¶ In Epist. ad Galat. l. 3.

* Orat. 20, 21.

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pose, that "the Arian heresy seized upon the greatest part of the church:" and, to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. S.'s demonstration of the indefectibility of the generality of Christians, he asks, * "Where are those that define the church by multitude, and despise the little flock?" &c. And this heresy was of a long continuance, for, from its first rise, which happened in the twentieth year of Constantine, it continued (as Joh. Abbas † hath calculated it) two hundred and sixty-six years. And the Pelagian heresy (if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great champions of the church against it) did in a manner prevail as much as Arianism, as the said author complains in his preface to his book, ‡ that "almost the whole world was run after Pelagius into error." Will Mr. S. now say, that, in the height of these heresies, "the generality of Christians did firmly adhere to tradition?" If he say they did, let him answer the express testimonies produced to the contrary: but if they did not, then his demonstration also fails as to "the generality of Christians." And if the greater part of Christians may fall off from tradition, what demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser to do so? Who will say it is in reason impossible that a thousand persons should relinquish tradition, though nine hundred of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwise secured from doing so, than those were who have actually relinquished it? Now is not this a clear evidence that this which he calls a demonstration *a priori* is no such thing? Because every demonstration *a priori* must be from causes which are necessary, whereas his demonstration is from volun-

* Orat. 25.

† Chron. ad Annum octavum Maurit.

‡ Causa Dei.

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tary causes. So that unless he can prove that voluntary causes are necessary, he shall never demonstrate that it is impossible for the generality of any company of men to err, who have every one of them free will, and are every one of them liable to passion and mistake.

§. 5. From all this it appears, that his whole discourse about the original and progress of heresy, and the multitudes of heretics in several ages, is as clear a confutation of his own demonstration as can be desired. The only thing that he offers in that discourse, to prevent this objection which he foresaw it liable to, is this: "It is not (says he *) to be expected but that some contingencies should have place where a whole species in a manner is to be wrought upon; it suffices that the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the preservation of mankind; the virtue of faith not being to continue longer than mankind its only subject does; and they will easily appear as efficacious as the other, if we consider the strength of those causes before explicated, and reflect that they are effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of mankind's propagation; and if we look into history for experience of what hath passed in the world since the propagation of Christianity, we shall find more particulars failing in propagating their kind, than their faith." To which I answer,

* P. 65.

First, That it may reasonably be expected there should be no contingencies in any particulars, where causes of actual will are supposed to be put in all; because (as he says truly) "a cause put actually causing cannot but produce its effect." Suppose then constant causes laid in all mankind of an

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actual will to speak truth to the best of their knowledge, were it not reasonable to expect that there would be no such contingency to the world's end, as that any man should tell a lie? Nay, it were madness for any man to think any such contingency should be, supposing causes actually causing men always to speak truth.

Secondly, It is far from truth, "that the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the propagation of mankind." And whereas he would prove the strength of those causes which are laid to preserve faith, because they are "effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of mankind's propagation;" I hope nobody that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own writers, of more than one age, concerning the general viciousness and debauchery of their priests and monks, will be over-forward to believe, that all those who debar themselves of lawful marriage, do abstain from those unlawful pleasures.

§. 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds—"That if we look into histories for experience of what is passed in the world since the first planting of Christianity, we shall find far more particulars failing in propagating their kind, than their faith." Do any histories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greater part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But histories do confirm that the far greatest part of the Christian world did fall off to Arianism and Pelagianism; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vast territories of the

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world either wholly, or for the greatest part of them, take up a humour against propagating mankind? and yet both history, and the experience of the present age assure us, that a great part of Asia and Africa (where the most flourishing churches in the world once were) are fallen off from Christianity, and become either Mahometans or heathens. In Africa almost all those vast regions which Christianity had gained from heathenism, Mahometanism hath regained from Christianity. And all the north part of Africa lying along the Mediterranean (where Christianity flourished once as much as ever it did at Rome) is at this time utterly void of Christians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And, not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had (as is thought) from the apostles' time, professed the Christian faith, hath within these one hundred and fifty years, for want of ministers (as Alvarez* tells us) quitted Christianity, and is partly revolted to heathenism, partly fallen off to Mahometanism. So that it seems, that, notwithstanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition may fail in a largely-extended church. As for Asia, in the easterly parts of it, there is not now one Christian to four of what they were fifty years ago; and in the more southerly parts of it (where Christianity had taken the deepest root) the Christians are far inferior in number to the idolators and Mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have those Christian nations which are turned Mahometans and pagans failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear instances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

* Hist. Æthiop.

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§. 7. But besides those who have totally apostatized from Christianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the Jacobites and Nestorians, and all those other sects which agree with and depend upon these, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I say, have not all these renounced tradition for several ages? And here in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germanies, France, and Switzerland? have not the kingdoms of Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and a considerable part of Ireland, in Mr. S.'s opinion, deserted tradition? If I should once see a whole nation fail because nobody would marry and contribute to the propagation of mankind; and should find this sullen humour to prevail in several nations, and to overspread vast parts of the world, I should then in good earnest think it possible for mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that, whatever cause he assigns of heresy,* as pride, ambition, lust, or any other vice or interest, if these can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, then, where is the efficacy of the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire in any? For the demonstration holds as strongly for all Christians as for any.

* P. 67.

§. 8. Secondly, From these grounds it would follow that no Christian can live wickedly; because the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear must in all reason be as powerful and efficacious causes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonstration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reasoning;

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for he * argues in this manner: "Good is the proper object of the will; good proposed makes the will to desire that good, and consequently the known means to obtain it: now infinite goods and harms sufficiently proposed are of their own nature incomparably more powerful causes to carry the will than temporal ones. Since, then, when two causes are counterpoised, the lesser, when it comes to execution, is no cause as to the substance of that effect, it follows, that there is no cause to move the wills of a world of believers to be willing to do that which they judge would lose themselves and their posterity infinite goods, and bring them infinite harms, &c. in case a sufficient proposal or application be not wanting," which, he tells us, † is not wanting, because "Christianity urged to execution, gives its followers a new life and a new nature, than which a nearer application cannot be imagined." Doth not this argument extend to the lives of Christians, as well as their belief? So that we may as well infer from these grounds, that it is impossible that those who profess Christianity should live contrary to it, as that they should fail to deliver down the doctrine of Christ; because, whatever can be an inducement and temptation to any man to contradict this doctrine by his practice, may equally prevail upon him to falsify it. For why should men make any more scruple of damning themselves and their posterity by teaching them false doctrines, than by living wicked lives? Which are equally pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only upon account of the bad influence which such examples of fathers and teachers are like to have upon their scholars, but likewise they are one of the strongest

* P. 62.

† P. 65.

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arguments in the world to persuade them, that their teachers do not themselves believe that religion which they teach; for if they did, they would live according to it. Why should any man think that those arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of Christians to make them live holy lives, should be so necessarily efficacious to make them so much concerned for the preserving of a right belief? Nay, we have great reason to believe, that such persons will endeavour, as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to their lives. And this is the true source of those innovations in faith for which we challenge the church of Rome; which any man may easily discern, who will but consider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a secular interest, and the gratifying of that inordinate appetite after riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church.

SECT. IV.

The second answer to his demonstration.

§. 1. SECONDLY, The main grounds of his demonstration are apparently false: for,

First, This demonstration supposeth that the generality of Christian parents in all ages perfectly understood the doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembered it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their children in it; which is as contrary to experience, as that the generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth, likewise, that this doctrine, and every substantial part of it,

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was received and remembered by the generality of children as it was taught; and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake: so he tells us, † "That the substance of faith comes clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living cannot possibly be ignorant of it." But whether this be reasonable enough to be supposed or not, may easily be determined, not only from every man's own experience of the world, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our Saviour? And yet his disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it: so that, in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this doctrine from himself with an infallible Spirit, by which they might be led into all truth, and secured from error and mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this doctrine. The apostles, who taught the world by an infallible Spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary parents can teach their children; yet, in all the churches which they planted, they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their epistles. Nay, the apostle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews † with such a degree of dulness and stupidity, that, after fitting time and means of instruction, they were still ignorant of the very principles of Christianity: so he tells them, "That when for the time they ought to be teachers of others, they had need that one should teach them again which be the first prin-

† P. 53.

† Heb. v. 11, 12.

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ciples of the oracles of God." And St. Jerome tells us, * "That the primitive churches were tainted with many gross errors whilst the apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ yet warm in Judea." But it may be there have been better teachers since, and children are more apt to learn now than men were then. Who knows how the world may be changed?

* Advers. Luciferian.

§. 2. Secondly, This demonstration supposeth the hopes and fears which Christian religion applies to men's minds to be certain and necessary causes of actual will in men to adhere to the doctrine of Christ; and consequently, that they must necessarily adhere to it. That he supposeth them to be necessary, I have his own word for it; for he tells † us, "That he hath endeavoured to demonstrate the indefectibleness of tradition as the proper and necessary effect of those causes which preserve and continue tradition on foot," and what those causes are he told us before, † "That they are hopes and fears strongly applied." But I hope that the indefectibleness of tradition cannot be a necessary effect of the strong application of those hopes and fears, unless those hopes and fears be a necessary cause of that effect. And indeed this is sufficiently implied in his saying, that "they are the causes of actual will" in Christians to adhere to tradition. For if these "causes of actual will" be constant, (as he must suppose) then they are certain, and necessary, and infallible causes of adhering to this doctrine. For whatever is in act is necessary while it is so, and if it be constantly in act, the effect is always necessary. But what a wild supposition is this, that moral motives and arguments working

† P. 75.

† P. 60.

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upon a free principle, the will of man, do necessarily produce their effect! Is it necessary that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell should keep Christians constant to the doctrine of Christ? And is it not as necessary that these arguments should prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonstrate that all men must be good who have sufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reason impossible that moral arguments should be of a necessary and infallible efficacy, because they are always propounded to a free agent, who may choose whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed, it is always reasonable that men should yield to them, and if they be reasonable they will; but so long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by these arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man to entertain the Christian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily; that is, whether he will or not, and can no more choose whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the light when the sun shines upon his eyes, or whether he will hear a sound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears, or (to use Mr. S.'s * own similitudes) whether he will "feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality" that affects his senses? We see then how unreasonable his suppositions are, and yet without these grounds his demonstration falls: for if it be possible that Christians may mistake or forget the doctrine of Christ, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the

* P. 53.

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will of man, which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the arguments of hope and fear; then it is possible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonstration, which supports itself upon such principles as do directly affront the constant experience and the clearest reason of mankind?

§. 3. And here I cannot but take notice how inconsistent he is to himself in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, * that "tradition hath for its basis the best nature in the universe, that is, man's; not according to his moral part, defectible by reason of original corruption; nor yet his intellectuals, darkly groping in the pursuit of science, &c. but according to those faculties in him perfectly and necessarily subject to the operations and strokes of nature; that is, his eyes, ears, handling, and the direct impressions of knowledge, as naturally and necessarily issuing from the affecting those senses, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality." So that, according to this discourse, the basis of tradition is not man's nature considered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflection; for in this consideration it is dark and defectible: but man's nature considered only as capable of "direct sensitive knowledge," as acting naturally and necessarily. Which is to say, that tradition is founded in the nature of man, considered not as a man but a brute; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it "the best nature in the universe." But now, how will he reconcile this discourse with the grounds of his demonstration? where he tells us, that the stability of tradition is founded in the "arguments of hope and

* P. 55.

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fear," the objects of which being future and at a distance, cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impressions upon his senses, but must work upon him by way of intellectual reflections and considerations. For I hope he will not deny but that the "arguments of hope and fear" work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, else how are they arguments? And if man, according to his moral part, be (as he says) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purposely all along (both for the reader's ease and mine own) neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistencies; but these are such clear and transparent contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

SECT. V.

§. 1. THIRDLY, This demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

First, The tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any doctrine in the world, being short and plain, planted in every man's nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of mankind. And yet this tradition, not having passed through many hands (by reason of the long age of man) was so defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapse into polytheism and idolatry. Now a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of fact, might, by a stronger demonstration than Mr. S.'s, prove, that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should

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fail; as Zeno demonstrated the impossibility of motion against Diogenes walking before his eyes. For the doctrine of the one true God "was settled in the heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be the way to happiness, and the contradicting or deserting of this to be the way to misery." And this doctrine was by him so taught to his children, who were encouraged by these motives to adhere to this doctrine, and to propagate it to their children, and "were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful." Now the hopes of happiness, and the fears of misery "strongly applied, are the causes of actual will.—Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power;" that is, "what they were bred to was knowable by them," and that much more easily than any other doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. "This put, it follows as certainly, that a great number in each age would continue to hold themselves, and teach their children as themselves had been taught, that is, would follow and stick to this tradition of the one true God, as it doth that a cause put actually causing produceth its effect. Actually, I say; for since the cause is put, and the patient disposed, it follows inevitably that the cause is put still actually causing." This demonstration, which concludes an apparent falsehood, hath the whole strength of Mr. S.'s, and several advantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by this tradition is the most important, being the first principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the faculty of preserving it much greater, than of the Christian doctrine, for the causes before-mentioned. And yet, after all, it signifies nothing against certain experience,

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and unquestionable matter of fact; only it sufficiently shews the vanity of Mr. S.'s pretended demonstration, built upon the same or weaker grounds.

§. 2. Secondly, The other instance shall be in the Greek church, who received the Christian doctrine as entire from the apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same fears and hopes strongly applied to be actual causes of will; in a word, all the same arguments and causes to preserve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had; and yet, to the utter confusion of Mr. S.'s demonstration, tradition hath failed among them. For as speculators, they deny the "procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son;" and as testifiers, they disown any such doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church, by the apostles as the doctrine of Christ.

§. 3. To this instance of the Greek church, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us,† that "the plea of the Greek church is non-tradition; alleging only this, that their fathers did not deliver the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost; not that they say the contrary; which clearly demonstrates there are no opposite traditions between them and us." But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to secure his main demonstration of the impossibility of tradition's failing against this instance. For that the Greeks have no such tradition as this, "That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son," is as good evidence

† Apology for Tradition, p. 51.

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of the failure of tradition as if they had a positive tradition, "That he proceeds only from the Father;" especially if we consider that they* charge the Latin church with innovation in this matter, and say that the addition of that clause, of the procession from the Son also, is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a devilish invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle so material an objection (and, I fear, his own conscience likewise) by a pitiful evasion instead of a solid answer? What though there be no opposite traditions between the Greek and Latin church, yet, if their faith be opposite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath so very well confuted the infallibility of popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, should not by the same light of reason discover the fondness of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater absurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to shew Mr. White the absurdity of it, I will apply his demonstration of the infallibility of Christian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will see that it does as strongly prove the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman catholic, as they are pleased to call it. His demonstration is this:

* Phoc. Ep. 7.

† "Christ commanded his apostles to preach to all the world, and, lest any one should doubt of the effect, he sent his Spirit into them to bring to their remembrance what he had taught them; which Spirit did not only give them a power to do what he inclined them to, but

† De Fid. et Theol. Tract. 1. sect. 4.

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did cause them actually to do it." I cannot but take notice, by the way, of the ill consequence of this; which is, that men may doubt whether those who are to teach the doctrine of Christ will remember it, and teach it to others, unless they have that extraordinary and efficacious assistance of the Holy Ghost which the apostles had: if this be true, his demonstration is at an end, for he cannot plead that this assistance hath been continued ever since the apostles. He proceeds: "The apostles preached this doctrine; the nations understood it, lived according to it, and valued it as that which was necessary to them and their posterity, incomparably beyond any thing else." All this I suppose done to and by the Greeks as well as any other nation. "These things being put, it cannot enter into any man's understanding, but that the Christian [Greeks] of the first age, being the scholars of the apostles, could and would earnestly commend the Christian doctrine to their posterity; if so, it is evident that they did. So that the continuance of the purity of the faith in the [Greek] church is founded upon this: That fathers always delivered the same doctrine to their children which they had received from their fathers, and did believe it under this very notion and title as received; nor could any one [of that church] deliver another doctrine under this title, but he would be convinced of a lie by the rest; and if the whole [Greek] church should endeavour to deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and there is the same reason if they should leave out any article of the old doctrine,] that the whole age would be in their consciences condemned of perfidiousness and parricide. Now this is as impossible

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as it is that all mankind should conspire to kill themselves." And he afterwards* gives the reason why it is so impossible that tradition should fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, "That if the tradition of the Christian faith be no more firm than the course of the sun and moon, and the propagation of mankind, then God hath shewn himself an unskilful artificer." What is there in all this demonstration, which may not be accommodated to the Greek church with as much force and advantage as to the catholic? Unless he can shew, that it is very possible that all the men in Greece may conspire to kill themselves, but yet absolutely impossible that all the men in the world should do so; which I am sure he cannot shew, unless he can demonstrate, that though it be possible for a million of as wise men as any are to be found in the world together, to conspire to do a foolish action, yet it is impossible that a hundred millions, not one jot wiser than the other, should agree together to the doing of it.

* De Fid. et Theol. Tract. 1. sect. 5.

§. 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White's answer to this objection doth not signify any thing to his purpose. For if the procession of the Holy Ghost was part of Christ's doctrine, then it was delivered by the apostles to the Greek church; if so, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age, and that to the next, and so on; but it seems they have failed. Where then is the force of hopes and fears strongly applied? Where are the certain causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine? Why is not the effect produced, "the causes being put actually causing?" If the apostles delivered this doctrine, oral tradition is so clear and "unmis-

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takable, and * brings down faith clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living (much less the Greeks, that were the flower of mankind) could not possibly be ignorant of it; nay, † it exceeds all the power of nature to blot knowledge thus fixed out of the soul of one single believer (much more of so vast a church). And ‡ since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he did so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole church should in any age fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man." And § since "it is natural for every man to speak truth, and grace is to perfect nature in whatever is good in it, it follows, that one truly Christian heart is far more fixed to veracity, than others not imbued with these heavenly tenets; and consequently, that a multitude of such must incomparably exceed in point of testifying, the same number of others unfortified by Christ's doctrine." And since ‖ "such a thought cannot enter into the most depraved nature, as to harm another without any good to himself, and yet this must be if we put Christian fathers misteaching their children unreceived doctrines for received (and I hope, for the same reason, received doctrines for unreceived) contrary to their knowledge. For supposing sanctity in the (Greek) church, (and why may not we as well as in the Latin?) that is, that multitudes in it make heaven their first love, and look on spiritual goods as their main concern," &c. "it follows, that had fathers" of that church, "in any age, consented to mislead their posterity from what themselves (not

* P. 53. and 54.

† Ibid.

‡ P. 78.

§ P. 86.

‖ P. 89.

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only) conceited (but knew) to be true, they should do the most extreme harm imaginable to others, without any the least good to themselves: which is perhaps impossible in one single man, more in few, but infinitely in a multitude especially of good men."

§. 5. Thus I might apply the rest of this ranting rhetoric (but that I am weary of transcribing it) concerning * "the natural love of parents to their children" (unless we suppose the Greek church destitute of it), which must needs engage them to use the means proper to bring them to heaven, and save them from hell: as also concerning "the natural care men have of not losing their credit by telling pernicious lies." And, not to omit the best part of his demonstration † (which was therefore prudently reserved to the last place), I might likewise shew how the principles of each science, arithmetic, geometry, logic, nature, morality, historical prudence, politics, metaphysics, divinity, and last of all the new "science of controversy," (as he calls it) or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disputing (the first principle whereof, he tells us, is, that tradition is certain), do all contribute to shew the certainty of tradition; that is, the impossibility that any part of Christ's doctrine should fail in the Greek church any more than in the Latin. And surely arithmetic, geometry, logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, &c. will all stand up for the Greek church in this quarrel; for, considering that Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their country.

* P. 90. 91.

† P. 93.

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§. 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to oral tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the apostles, thought fit to share Scripture and tradition between these two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right hand on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great blessing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the seat of infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnished with this infallible way of conveying the Christian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that, as the Scriptures of the New Testament were left in Greek, so oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some show of reason: Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as these into lusty demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this instance of the Greek church: otherwise (for aught I see) this instance will hold good against him; and whatever he can say for the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be said of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the apostles preached the same doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear, which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet, notwithstanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now assign the age wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and shew how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered with-

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out any such conspiracy, and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would entreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies), How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? And in what age this was done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of Christ, (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the apostles) and also to shew from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of Christ down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of Christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise, I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call demonstrations better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to the honest old *mumpsimus* of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost; or (to make the business short, and stop all gaps with one bush) come over to the Jesuits, and acknowledge the pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile them-

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selves to him, and prevent that direful stroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church.—And thus I have done with his first demonstration: and I take it for a good sign that the popish cause is at a very low ebb, when such stuff as this must be called demonstration.

SECT. VI.

§. 1. I come now to his demonstration *a posteriori*, which, although it fall of itself if the demonstration *a priori* fail; yet, because it hath some peculiar absurdities of its own, I shall consider it by itself as well as with relation to the other. Mr. S.'s demonstration *a posteriori*.

§. 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the grounds of it, according to his usual fashion, he premiseth something as yielded by protestants, which, in his sense, no protestant ever granted. Just so he deals with us before concerning the Scriptures, saying, that by them the protestants "must mean unsensed letters and characters." But let us see what it is:* "That this demonstration *a posteriori* seems a needless endeavour against the protestants, who yield that those points in which we agree, as the trinity, incarnation, &c. came down by this way of tradition: and this (he saith) no protestant ever denied." And then he asks, "Whether the same virtue of tradition would not have been as powerful to bring down other points in which we do not agree, had any such been?" Now if he speak any thing to his own purpose, he must suppose protestants to yield that all

* P. 76.

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those points wherein we are agreed, were conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition without writing: but this all protestants deny. So that that only which would avail his cause against us, is to shew, that those points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by oral teaching, but that they are likewise contained in Scripture, without which, we say, we can have no sufficient certainty and assurance at this distance, that they were the doctrine of Christ, and that they were not either totally innovated, or else corrupted in the conveyance from what they were at first. And if he can shew this concerning any point in difference, I promise to yield it to him.

§. 3. I come now to his demonstration, which I shall set down in his own words, with the principles upon which it relies:* "The effect then we will pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of such a cause, is the present persuasion of traditionary Christians (or catholics) that their faith descended from Christ and his apostles uninterruptedly, which we find most firmly rooted in their heart; and the existence of this persuasion we affirm to be impossible, without the existence of tradition's ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove this, I lay this first principle: That age which holds her faith thus delivered from the apostles, neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any age since the apostles had changed or innovated therein. The second principle shall be this: No age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to posterity as received from Christ by continual succession." The sum of which is this; That because a present multitude of Christians (viz. the Roman church) are per-

* P. 77, 78.

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suaded, that Christ's doctrine hath descended to them solely by an uninterrupted oral tradition, therefore this persuasion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cause but the indeficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the present age, nor any age before, could make any change or innovation, then the persuasion of the present age is a plain demonstration that this doctrine was always the same, and consequently, that tradition cannot fail.

§. 4. In answer to this I shall endeavour to make good these four things:

First, That these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *a priori*.

Secondly, That these principles are not sufficiently proved by him.

Thirdly, That doctrines and practices, which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

Fourthly, That it is not the present persuasion of the church of Rome, (whom he calls the traditionary Christians) nor ever was, that their faith hath descended to them solely by oral tradition. If I can now make good these four things, I hope his demonstration is at an end.

SECT. VII.

The first answer to his second demonstration.

§. 1. That these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *a priori*. For if the doctrine of Christ was either imperfectly taught in any age, or mistaken by the learners, or any part of it forgotten, (as it seems

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the whole Greek church have forgotten that fundamental point of the procession of the Holy Ghost, as the Roman church accounts it,) or if the arguments of hope and fear be not necessary causes of actual will to adhere to tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any age, and yet men may pretend to have followed tradition. But I have shewn, that ignorance and negligence, and mistake, and pride, and lust, and ambition, and any other vice or interest, may hinder those causes from being effectual to preserve tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected that those persons who innovate and change the doctrine, should acknowledge that their new doctrines are contrary to the doctrine of Christ, but that they should at first advance them as pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very doctrines which Christ delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that shall deny it.

§. 2. I will give a clear instance of the possibility of this, in the doctrine of transubstantiation, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the ninth or tenth age after Christ. We will suppose then that, about this time, when universal ignorance, and the genuine daughter of it, (call her devotion or superstition) had overspread the world, and the generality of people were strongly inclined to believe strange things; and even the greatest contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of mysteries, being told by their priests and guides, that the more contradictious any thing is to reason, the greater merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that in this state of things one or more

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of the most eminent then in the church, either out of design, or superstitious ignorance and mistake of the sense of our Saviour's words used in the consecration of the sacrament, should advance this new doctrine, that the words of consecration, "This is my body," are not to be understood by any kind of trope (as the like forms in Scripture are, as "I am the vine—I am the door," which are plain tropes), but, being used about this great mystery of the sacrament, ought in all reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable mystery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real change of the substance of bread and wine, made by virtue of these words in the real body and blood of our Saviour; and in all this, I suppose nothing but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual for men, either out of ignorance or interest, to advance new opinions in religion. And such a doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the people to a greater veneration of them: which advantage Mr. Rushworth* seems to be very sensible of, when he tells us, that the power of the priest in this particular is "such a privilege, as, if all the learned clerks that ever lived since the beginning of the world should have studied to raise, advance, and magnify, some one state of men to the highest pitch of reverence and eminency, they could never (without special light from heaven) have thought of any thing comparable to this." I am of his mind, that it was a very notable device; but, I am apt to think, invented "without any special light from heaven." Nor was such a doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the people in an age prodigiously ignorant,

* Dial. 1. sect. 4.

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and strongly inclined to superstition, and thereby well prepared to receive the grossest absurdities under the notion of mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a great honour and reverence to the sacrament. Now supposing such a doctrine as this, so fitted to the humour and temper of the age, to be once asserted, either by chance or out of design, it would take like wildfire; especially if, by some one or more who bore sway in the church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And although Mr. Rushworth says,* it is "impossible that the authority of one man" should sway so much in the world, because (says he) "surely the devil himself would rather help the church, than permit so little pride among men;" yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: for though he delivers *it* confidently, and with a *surely*, yet I make some doubt whether the devil would be so forward to help the church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he would rather choose to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than cross a design so dear to him by unseasonable temptations to pride: so that, notwithstanding Mr. Rushworth's reason, it seems very likely that such a doctrine, in such an age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great persons in the church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive temper of superstitious ignorance, than to entertain such a doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make objections against it, as if this doctrine

* Dial. 3. sect. 7.

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were new and full of contradictions, they may easily be borne down by the stream, and by the eminency, and authority, and pretended sanctity, of those who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as heretics, then it is seasonable to maintain that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then (as they do in effect now) that contradictions ought to be no scruple in the way of faith; that the more impossible any thing is, it is the fitter to be believed; that it is not praiseworthy to believe plain possibilities, but this is the gallantry and heroical power of faith, this is the way to oblige God Almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and downright contradictions: for God requires at the people's hands (as Mr. Rushworth* tells us) "a credulity of things above and beyond nature, nay, beyond all the fables, be it spoken with respect, that ever man invented." After this doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and by the most inhuman severities and cruelties suppressed dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new word transubstantiation may pretend also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by Christians in all ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the doctrine of the sacrament as a term of art appendant to it. And when a superstitious church and designing governors have once gained this post, and

* Dial. 1. sect. 4.

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by means of this enormous article of transubstantiation have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any error, though ever so gross and senseless; then innovations come in amain, and by shoals; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for that very reason the more proper matter for an article of faith. And if any of these innovations be objected against, as contrary to former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith, and believing another contradiction, viz. that though they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§. 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to history and experience. For that the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed them till the Reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all historians; and even by those writers, that have been the greatest pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age soever there are a great company of superstitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make use of this easy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now that this was the state of those ages of the church, will be evident to any from these testimonies. Platina* writes of Pope Romanus, that he nulled the acts of his predecessor Stephanus. "For (says he) these popes minded nothing else but how they might extinguish both the name and dignity of their predecessors." And if so, who can doubt, but that these popes, who made it their business to destroy the very memory of their ancestors, would be very little careful to preserve the doc-

* In Vit. Romani, Papæ 117. A. C. 900.

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trine of forefathers? But what the care of those times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius * says by way of confutation of that passage in Platina, concerning Pope Joan's reading publicly at Rome, at her first coming thither. "This (says he) is utterly false, for there was nothing that they were less solicitous about in those times, than to furnish the city with any public teachers." And the time which Onuphrius speaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Burgomensis † says, "It happened in that age, through the slothfulness of men, that there was a general decay of virtue both in the head and members." Again, ‡ "These times, through the ambition and cruel tyranny of the popes, were extremely unhappy ——For the popes, setting aside the fear of God and his worship, fell into such enmities among themselves as cruel tyrants exercise towards one another." Sabellicus § says, "It is wonderful to observe what a strange forgetfulness of all arts did about this time seize upon men; insomuch, that neither the popes, nor other princes, seemed to have any sense or apprehension of any thing that might be useful to human life. There were no wholesome laws, no reparations of churches, no pursuit of liberal arts, but a kind of stupidity, and madness, and forgetfulness of manners, had possessed the minds of men." And a little after, "I cannot (says he) but much wonder from whence these tragical examples of popes should spring; and how their minds should come to be so devoid of all piety, as neither to regard the person which they sustained, nor the place they

* In Platin.

† An. 906.

‡ An. 908.

§ Ennead. 9. l. 1. Ann. 900.

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were in." Sigonius,* speaking of these times, about the beginning of the tenth century, calls them "the foulest and blackest, both in respect of the wickedness of princes, and the madness of the people, that are to be found in all antiquity." Genebrard, † speaking of the same time, "This (says he) is called the unhappy age; being destitute of men eminent for wit and learning, and also of famous princes and popes. In this time there was scarcely any thing done worthy to be remembered by posterity." And he adds afterwards, "But chiefly unhappy in this one thing, that for almost a hundred and fifty years together, about fifty popes did utterly degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors." He should have added further—but even to a miracle happy in another respect, that during this long and total degeneracy from the piety and virtue of their ancestors, they did not in the least swerve from them in matters of faith and doctrine: a thing incredible, were there not demonstration for it. Werner ‡ gives this character of that time: "About the year of our Lord one thousand there began an effeminate time, in which the Christian faith began to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vigour; insomuch, that, in many countries of Christendom, neither sacraments nor ecclesiastical rites were observed——And people were given to soothsaying and witchcraft, and the priest was like the people." It seems by this testimony, that tradition did falter a little in that age, else the Christian faith could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much: and (which threatens Mr. S.'s demonstration most of all) that the practical tradition of sa-

* De Regn. Ital. l. 6.

† Chron. l. 4.

‡ Fascic. Tempor.

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craments and other ecclesiastical observances, did fail in many Christian countries. Gerbert, * who lived in that time, gives this short character of the Roman church, in an epistle of his to Stephen, deacon of that church: "The world stands amazed at the manners of Rome." But most full is the complaint of a great† prelate of the church concerning those times: "In the west (says he) and almost all the world over (especially among those who were called the faithful) faith failed, and there was no fear of God among them: (it seems the argument of fear had lost its force:) justice was perished from among men, and violence prevailing against equity governed the nations. Fraud, deceit, and the arts of cozenage, were grown universal. All kind of virtue gave way as an useless thing, and wickedness supplied its place. The world seemed to be declining apace towards its evening, and the second coming of the Son of man to draw near: for love was grown cold, and faith was not found upon earth. All things were in confusion, and the world looked as if it would return to its old chaos.——All sorts of fornication were committed with the same freedom as if they had been lawful actions; for men neither blushed at them, nor were punished for them——Nor did the clergy live better than the people——For the bishops were grown negligent of the duty of their place, &c. In a word, men ran themselves headlong into all vice, and all flesh had corrupted its way." And further, to shew the great neglect of priests and bishops in the work of teaching and instruction, (which is so necessary to the preserving of tradition inviolable) I will add the testimony of one ‡ who

* Ep. 40.

† Bell. Sacr. l. 1. c. 8.

‡ Elfric. Ser. ad Sacerdot.

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lived in those times; who tells us, "That in those days the priests and bishops, who ought to have been the pillars of the church, were so negligent, that they did not mind the Divine Scriptures; nor take any care to teach and instruct scholars that might succeed them, as we read holy men had used to do, who left many scholars perfectly instructed to be their successors." If they had only neglected the Scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it seems they took no care to instruct people in the way of oral tradition, nor to furnish the church with a new generation of able teachers, who might deliver down from hand to hand the sense and faith of forefathers. This last testimony the late learned Lord Primate of Ireland, Bishop Usher, (in his book De Christian. Eccles. Success. &c. † where several of the testimonies I have produced, with many more to the same purpose, may be seen) cites out of a MS. in Bene't College library, in Cambridge; concerning the authority of which MS. there need be no dispute between Mr. S. and me; because the whole force and effect of this testimony are sufficiently contained in those citations which I have brought out of public and unquestionable books.

† C. 2. and 3.

§. 4. All these testimonies, which I have produced, are, in general, and for the substance of them, confirmed by two of the greatest props of the Romish church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine ‡ says of this tenth age, "That there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy." Baronius § speaks more particularly: "What was then the face of the Roman church! How deformed! When whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief

‡ De Rom. Pontif. l. 4. c. 12.

§ Annal. tom. 10. an. 900.

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sway at Rome; and, at their pleasure, changed sees, appointed bishops, and (which is horrible to mention) did thrust into St. Peter's see their own gallants, false popes, who would not have been mentioned in the catalogue of the Roman popes, but only for the more distinct recording of so long a succession of times!" And a little after, "Christ was then, it seems, in a very deep sleep——And, which was worse, when the Lord was thus asleep, there were no disciples to awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep. What kind of cardinals, presbyters, and deacons, can we think were chosen by these monsters, when nothing is so natural as for every one to propagate his own likeness?" It is very much that these lewd women, and their favourite popes, cardinals, and bishops, who then swayed the church, should, when they were so careless of their own souls, be so tender of the salvation of posterity; and when they administered all other affairs of the church so extravagantly, should be so careful of the main chance, as to transmit the Christian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to succeeding ages! Yet Mr. S. hath demonstrated this *a posteriori*, which seems so very strange to a man that considers things *a priori*.

§. 5. But, it may be, this dismal state of the Roman church lasted but a little while; and she did in the same age, before tradition could be interrupted, recover herself out of this degenerate condition. I will, therefore, inquire a little into the state of succeeding times. And I find, in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard * complaining, that the degeneracy of the priests was, in his days, greater than ever; "We cannot (says he) now say, As the people so is

* In Conver. Sancti Pauli, serm. 1.

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the priest; for the people are not so bad as their priests." In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, "Of the corrupt state of the church;" by which we may make some judgment, whether in that age it was, as Mr. S. says, impossible but that the Christian doctrine should be entirely preserved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He says,

* C. 3. * there was an universal degeneracy in the church "from the very head of it, to its lowest members." In the same chapter he complains, "Who is there that preaches the gospel to the people? who shews them the way to salvation, either by word or action?" It seems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition.

† C. 5. Again, † speaking of the pope's taking to himself the collation of all vacant bishoprics and dignities, he says, one might think the pope did this, "that the church might be provided of worthier governors, both in respect of their learning and their lives, did not the thing itself declare the contrary; and that ignorant and useless persons (provided they had money) were by simony advanced to the highest degrees in the church."

‡ C. 6. And ‡ speaking what a vast number of candidates there was usually at Rome from all parts, waiting for benefices and dignities, he tells us, that many of these "did not come from their studies, or from schools of learning, to govern parishes; but from the plough, and from the meanest professions. And that they understood Latin and Arabic much at the same rate; and many of them could not read at all. But it may be (says he) their manners were such as might be some excuse for their ignorance. No; their learning was

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but little, their virtue was less; for being brought up in idleness, they followed nothing but debauchery and sports, &c. Hence it comes to pass, that in all places there are so many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant priests.——Hence it is that priests are so contemned by the common people.——Formerly the priesthood was highly honoured by the people, and nothing was more venerable than that order of men; but now nothing is more vile and despicable. ——* I make no doubt but that there are now more thieves and robbers, than true pastors in the church.——† Why should any man now flatter himself with hopes of preferment, because of his virtue or learning? Men do not now, as formerly, rise in the church by such arts.——‡ Which of those that are now-a-days advanced to the pontifical dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or heard, or learnt the Scriptures; yea, or ever touched any more than the cover of the Bible?" Again, § speaking of the prodigious covetousness of the governors of the church, and the gross neglect of their flocks, "They would (says he) much more contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand souls, than of ten or twelve shillings. But why do I say, more contentedly? when without the least trouble or disturbance to themselves, they can bear the loss of souls; a thing so far from their care, that it never entered into their thoughts." Had the heretics of those days but had wit enough, and a little money, they might, it seems, for a small sum, have hired the governors of the church to have renounced tradition, or to have ceased to propagate it; though they had known that in so doing they should have damned all their posterity. He

* C. 9.

† C. 11.

‡ C. 13.

§ C. 14.

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goes on and tells us, "That if there were, perhaps, any one who did not take these courses, the rest would all snarl at him, call him fool, and say he was unfit to be a priest.——So that the study of the Scriptures, together with the professors of it, was turned into laughter and scorn by all; but (which is prodigious) especially by the popes, who prefer their own tradition many degrees before the commands of God." I desire Mr. S. to take notice in what kind of times tradition was set up against Scripture. Again, * speaking of the choice of persons to be priests, he tells us, "That there was no inquiry made into their lives, no question about their manners. As for their learning, (says he) what need I speak of that? when we see the priests, almost universally, have much ado to read, though but in a hesitating and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable after another, without understanding either the sense of what they read, or the words." I am now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced that there was great need of it in those ages, in which scarcely any of the priests could either write or read. I omit the particulars of what he says † concerning the "common drunkenness and incontinency of priests, who (because they made conscience of marriage) kept whores in their houses;" concerning the dissolute lives of monks; and concerning nunneries, which, instead of being the sanctuaries of God, "were the abominable stews of Venus, and the receptacle of lascivious young men; insomuch (says he) that, at this day, it is the same thing to put a virgin into a nunnery, and to make her a common strumpet." And to shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but with relation to the

* C. 16.

† C. 20, 21. 23.

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general corruption of that age, he adds, * "That wickedness did so abound in all orders of men, that scarce one among a thousand was to be found who did truly live up to his profession: and if there was any one that did not follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to others, and was branded either as an insolent singular madman, or a hypocrite." I will conclude this long testimony with the character which he gives † of one of the popes of his time, Clement by name: viz. "That he did chiefly apply himself to gratify and oblige all the parasites and buffoons that had any interest in the several courts of princes: and to this end, did confer upon these, and upon handsome young boys, (which he much delighted in) almost all the vacant bishoprics, and most of the other church dignities." It is well that oral tradition hath the security of infallibility, otherwise it had in all probability been lost among this lewd sort of people, which yet they gravely call the "holy Roman catholic church."

* C. 25.

† C. 27.

§. 6. To this effect I might have produced testimonies concerning every age from the ninth to the sixteenth; but Mr. Cressy hath saved me that labour, who acknowledges, ‡ that "these worst times of the church, when ignorance, worldliness, pride, tyranny, &c. reigned with so much scope; when the popes (so wicked, so abominable in their lives) enjoyed so unlimited a power, even over secular princes themselves, and much more over the clergy:" I say, he acknowledges that these worst times continued during the space of about six ages before Luther. A competent time, one would think, for tradition to have miscarried in, were it not, as Mr. S. says, "indefectible." Mr.

‡ Exomolog. c. 68.

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*Exomolog. c. 68. Cressy indeed tells us, * that this was to him "an irrefragable testimony of a strange watchfulness of Divine Providence over the church, to preserve it from the gates of hell (that is, established and dangerous errors) during these worst times." And very likely it is that this might appear so to such a catholic, "whose judgment, (he tells us,) it is to renounce his own judgment:" but it will never appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judgment about him, unless Mr. Cressy can prove, that by that phrase, viz. the gates of hell, the Scripture does not mean gross wickedness of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewise that a general viciousness and debauchery of manners are not as pernicious to Christianity, and as destructive to the end of it, as established errors in doctrine. And if so, that the providence of God is not equally concerned to preserve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved these three things, then this declamatory discourse of his may signify something, but not before.

§. 7. Now if this be a true representation of the state of the Roman church in those ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads these testimonies, think it impossible that the doctrine of Christ should have been depraved in this age; or that the most senseless and absurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Christian doctrines: when scarcely any one knew what the doctrine of Christ was: when a general ignorance of letters, and almost an universal stupidity and madness had seized upon the minds of men: when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety both in the head and members of the church:

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when the lives of the popes were tragically wicked, and no footsteps of piety appeared in them: when, for about a hundred and fifty years together in a continued succession of fifty popes, there was scarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) sat in that chair: when the whores governed Rome, and put out and put in bishops at their pleasure; and made their own gallants popes, who would be sure to make a college of cardinals of such monsters as themselves: when pretty boys, and parasites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the nose, and were gratified with the best bishoprics and dignities in the church: when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Christian faith; when in many countries neither sacraments nor other ecclesiastical rites were observed: when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than these, were the common study and practice: when intemperance, and all kind of lewdness and debauchery, reigned in all sorts and orders of men: when the generality of bishops and priests (who, according to Mr. Rushworth, *can only teach the traditionary doctrine) were ignorant in the Scriptures and in every thing else (very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their office; and in the lewdness of their lives, did surpass the vilest of the people:—was not such an age a fit season to plant the doctrine of transubstantiation in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in so rank a soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the church then should be ignorant of the doctrine

* Dial. 3. sect. 3.

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of Christ, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood and fewer practised it: when prodigious impiety and wickedness did overspread the church from the pope down to the meanest of the laity, can any one believe that men generally made conscience to instruct their children in the true faith of Christ? Was it impossible there should be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed? That there should be any mistake about the doctrine of Christ, when there was so much ignorance: unless he be of Mr. Rushworth's * mind, who reckons ignorance among the parents of religion? Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? Were they strongly applied, or were they not? Were they causes of actual will in Christians, to believe well when they lived so ill? Or is Christianity only fitted to form men's minds to a right belief, but of no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath Christ taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? As the great Cardinal Perron † (stooping below his own wit and reason to serve a bad cause) tells us, that "the church sings, and will sing to the end of the world, I am black, but I am fair; that is to say, I am black in manners, but fair in doctrine:" as if the meaning of the prophecies and promises of the Scripture made to the church were this—that by the extraordinary care of God's providence, and peculiar assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be wicked, but orthodox to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous causes of imprinting Christ's doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else? and of securing that see and its supreme pastor in the faith and prac-

* Dial. 3. sect. 7.

† Reply to King James, l. 4. c. 6.

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tice of the Christian doctrine, above any other see or pastor whatsoever? who is so little versed in history, as not to understand the dismal state of religion in the Romish church in those times? who does not know what advantages the bishops of Rome and their servile clergy made of the ignorance and superstition of those and the succeeding ages, and by what arts and steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after? when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great king walk barefoot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of petulant monks: when they could send any man upon an errand to visit the holy sepulchre, or the shrine of such a saint, and command five or six kings with great armies upon a needless expedition into the Holy Land, that so during their absence they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impose upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) absurd and counterfeit tales of ancient saints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition: and could bring that foppish book the Legend almost into equal authority and veneration with the Bible: and persuade the easy people that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kissed it when he laid it down? Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the Roman bishops and clergy in these ages, the strange feats they played, and what absurdities they imposed upon the superstitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine, not only the possibility, but the easiness of innovating new doctrines as they pleased, under the specious pretences of antiquity, and constant, uninterrupted tradition.

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§. 8. And this kind of discourse concerning the possibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculously compares it, * as if an orator should go about to persuade people, that George, by the help of a long staff and a nimble cast of his body, and such-like advantages, might leap over Paul's steeple; "never considering all the while the disproportion of all these advantages to the height of the steeple: so (saith he) he that discourseth at large how errors use to slide into man's life, without comparing the power of the causes of error to the strength of resisting, which consists in this principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by tradition, &c. says no more towards proving an error's overrunning the church, than the orator for George's leaping over the steeple." How vain is this! when it appears from this instance that I have given of the state of the Roman church in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the causes of error were infinitely stronger than the power of resistance! The great causes of error, are ignorance and vice; where ignorance reigns there is no power; where vice, no will to resist it. And how great the ignorance and viciousness of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too apparent from the testimonies I have brought. Where was the strength of resisting error, when for a hundred and fifty years together the popes were the vilest of men, bishops and priests overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the people? In such a degenerate state of a church, what strength is there in this principle, "Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by tradition?" when those who ought to teach men what that doctrine is which

* Apology for Tradition, p. 49.

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was derived to them by tradition, are generally careless of their duty, and ignorant themselves what that doctrine is? when they addict themselves wholly to the satisfying their ambition, and other lusts, and carrying on designs of gain, and getting dominion over the people? What can hinder men so disposed from corrupting the doctrine of Christ, and suiting it to their own lusts and interests? And what shall hinder the people from embracing those corruptions; when by the negligence of their pastors to instruct them, and not only so, but also by their being deprived of the Scriptures in a known tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true doctrine of Christ is? So that in an age of such profound ignorance and vice, and general neglect of instruction, it is so far from being impossible for errors to overrun a church, that the contrary is morally impossible; and George's long staff, and advantageous cast of his body, are more powerful causes to enable him to leap over Paul's steeple, than this principle, That nothing is to be admitted but what descends by tradition, is to keep errors out of a church in an ignorant and vicious age; when few or none are either able or willing to instruct men in the truth. For, suppose this always to have been the principle of Christians, viz. That nothing is to be admitted as the doctrine of Christ, but what is descended to them by tradition; how shall this principle secure the church from heresy, any more than this, viz. That nothing but truth is to be assented to, doth secure men from error? Or more than this, viz. That no man is to do any thing but what is wise and virtuous, does secure the generality of mankind from folly and vice?

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SECT. VIII.

The second answer to his second demonstration.

§. 1. SECONDLY, The principles upon which this demonstration relies, are not sufficiently proved by him.

His first principle is this: "That age which holds her faith delivered thus from the apostles, neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any age since the apostles had changed or innovated any thing therein. This proposition (he tells us) needs no proof to evidence it, but only an explication: for since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or innovate in the case proposed, without knowing he did so; it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man." But, by his favour, that which he says is no proof, but only an explication, is a proof, if it be any thing: and the force of it is this: that which is inconsistent with the nature of one single man, is manifestly impossible to a whole age; but it is inconsistent with the nature of any single man to hold contrary to his knowledge, &c. therefore impossible to a whole age; and consequently, that age which holds her faith delivered thus from the apostles, neither can itself have changed any thing. nor, &c. So that, in order to the making good of this first principle, Mr. S. hath left nothing unproved but only this proposition, namely, that it is impossible that any one single man that holds his faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the apostles, should ever himself have changed

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any thing in it, or know or doubt that any age since the apostles hath changed or innovated any thing therein: and to make out the truth of this proposition, there only remains this to be proved, viz. That it is impossible for any single man to be mistaken: for if that be possible, then, contrary to Mr. S. a man may hold that to have been delivered as a doctrine of faith from the apostles, which was not so delivered.

§. 2. His second principle is this: "That no age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to posterity, as received from Christ by continual succession." He proves it thus; "Since man is a rational creature, he must have some reason or motive, good or bad, which he proposeth to himself, as an end to be achieved by his action: and whatever his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling posterity a late-invented thing was held immediately before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore, since a seen impossibility cannot be a motive to one not frantic; and since it is evidently impossible they should make posterity believe a thing so universally known to be false, as this must needs be, &c. it is as impossible this principle should falter, as that the foregoing age should conspire to act without a motive, or that the succeeding age should believe what they know to be otherwise, that is, should hold both sides of a contradiction in a clear matter of fact." The force of which is this: That it is impossible that any man not frantic should attempt to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine, because the immediate end of such an attempt must be to have this new doctrine believed; but it is impossible he should attain this end, and impossible he should not see that it

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is impossible to attain it: now a seen impossibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantic; therefore, no man that is not frantic can attempt to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible that there should be any heretics, if a heretic be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Christian doctrine: for if there be any such attempters they must be frantic, and if they be frantic they can be no heretics; for heresy implies a crime, but God will not impute the actions of madmen to them as faults. Again, suppose he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretic is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Christ's doctrine to be really so, though indeed it be not; why should such a person think it impossible to make men believe that to be received from Christ which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was so? And if this be granted, then it is not impossible that "man, though he be a rational creature," may attempt to innovate. And if so, then his second principle is not proved. If Mr. S. had any regard to the "noble science of controversy" (whereof he pretends to be so great a master) he would not bring such trifling sophisms instead of demonstrative proofs: and nothing less than a demonstrative proof will serve to establish any principle upon which a demonstration is to be built.

SECT. IX.

The third answer to Mr. S.'s second demonstration.

§. 1. DOCTRINES and practices which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence

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to uninterrupted tradition. And of this, I shall give several instances; one among the Jews, the rest among Christians.

1. I shall instance among the traditionary Jews, whose persuasion in our Saviour's time was, and still is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their cabala, hath descended to them from Moses uninterruptedly. Now here is the "existence of such a persuasion," as Mr. S. affirms to be "impossible without tradition's ever-indeficiency to beget it." And this persuasion of theirs is most exactly parallel with the pretensions of the Romish church, according to Mr. S. For here is a multitude of traditionary Jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the dissenters in that church, than the Romish church is in comparison to those Christians that dissent from her. Josephus tells us, * that "the richer sort were of the persuasion of the sadducees, but the multitude were on the pharisees' side." So that the pharisees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome—That they were the greatest number, and so they continue to this very day; insomuch, that although they do not call themselves the catholics, yet I am sure they call all Jews that do dissent from them schismatics. Now that the sadducees were for the written law against oral tradition, is, I confess, no credit to us; but that our Saviour reproved the traditionary doctrines and practices of the pharisees, because by them they made void the written law, is much more to the discredit of the assertors of oral tradition. Both Romanists and pharisees own alike a written doctrine, but then they both pretend the true sense and explication thereof to have de-

* Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.

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scended to them by oral tradition. For just as the traditionary Christians do now, so Josephus tells us the traditionary Jews of old, the pharisees, did pretend by their oral tradition "to interpret the law more accurately and exactly" than any other sect. In like manner he † tells us, that "all things that belonged to prayer and Divine worship, were regulated and administered according to their interpretations" of the law. And they both agree in this—to make void the word of God by their tradition; which the pharisees did no otherwise than Mr. S. does, by equalling oral tradition to Scripture; nay, preferring it above Scripture; in making it the sole rule of faith, and interpreting the Scripture according to it. Hence are those common sayings in the Talmud, and other Jewish books: "Do not think that the written law is the foundation, but that the law orally delivered is the right foundation;" which is to say, with Mr. S. that not the Scripture, but oral tradition, is the true rule of faith. Again, "There is more in the words of the scribes (viz. the testifiers of tradition) than in the words of the written law." Again, "The oral law excels the written, as much as the soul doth the body;" which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the Scripture without tradition is but a dead letter, destitute of life and sense. Hence, also, it is, that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themselves to the dictates of tradition even in the most absurd things, as appears by that common saying among them—"If the scribes say that the right hand is the left, and the left the right, (that bread is flesh, and wine is blood) hearken to

* Antiq. l. 17. c. 3. & de Bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12.

† Antiq. l. 18. c. 2.

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them;" that is, make no scruple of whatsoever they deliver as tradition, though never so contrary to reason or sense. And, lastly, the doctrines of the pharisees were many of them practical; such were all those which concerned external rites and observances, as "washing of hands and cups," &c. So that these pharisaical traditions had also that unspeakable advantage which Mr. S. says renders their traditions "unmistakable," that they were daily practised, and came down "clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living could not possibly be ignorant of them." Therefore, according to Mr. S.'s principles, it was impossible that any age of the Jews should be persuaded that these things were commanded by Moses and ever since observed, if they had not been so. And yet our Saviour denies these customs to have been of any such authority as they pretended.

§. 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to shew the agreement which is between the traditionary Jews and papists, their own writers so liberally acknowledging it. Mr. White indeed says, that * "the faith of the Jews was not delivered to them orally, but by writing;" than which nothing can be more inconsistent with his hypothesis. For if the Jewish faith was conveyed to them not orally but by writing, then either the Jewish church had no sufficient rule of faith, or else a writing may be such a rule. But other of their champions make great use of the parallel, between the traditionary Jews and the Romish church, to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full passage to this purpose; "As this (says he†) is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the

* De Fid. et Theol. Tract. 1. sect. 6.

† Rep. to King James, obser. 3. c. 4.

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majesty of the ancient Mosaic Scripture, to believe and observe not only all the things which are therein actually contained, but also those things which are therein contained mediately and relatively, as the doctrines of paradise, &c. which were not contained therein but mediately, and by the authority which it gave to the deposition of the patriarchal and Mosaic tradition, preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the synagogue; so this is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the majesty of the apostolical Scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it contains, not only immediately and by itself, but mediately and by reference to the apostolical traditions, to which in gross and generally it gives the authority of apostolical doctrines, and to the church the authority of guardian and depository to preserve and attest them." Voysin, in his Observations upon Raymundus Martin,* tells us, "That as in the old law the great consistory of Jerusalem was the foundation of the true tradition, so (says he) the see of Rome is the foundation of our tradition. And as the continual succession of the high-priests and fathers among the Jews was the great confirmation of the truth of their tradition, so (says he) with us the truth of our catholic doctrine is confirmed by a continual succession of popes."

* Pugio Fid. p. 145.

§. 3. From all this it appears, that the pharisees among the Jews made the same pretence to oral tradition which the papists do at this day, according to Mr. S. And if so, then Mr. S.'s demonstration *a posteriori* is every whit as strong for the Jews against our Saviour, as it is for the papists against the protestants. For we find that in our Saviour's time, it was then the present persuasion

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of the traditionary Jews, that their faith, and their rites, and the true sense and interpretation of their written law, was "descended from Moses and the prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was most firmly rooted in their hearts." But the Jews had constant tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince: and though the letter of the prophecies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did infallibly know that their Messiah was to be another kind of person, from sense written in their hearts, from the interpretation of those prophecies orally brought down to them "from the patriarchal and Mosaic tradition preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the synagogue, and from the living voice of their church essential;" that is, the universal consent of the then traditionary Jews. If it be said, that the Jewish tradition did indeed bring down several doctrines not contained in Scripture, of paradise, of hell, of the last judgment, of the resurrection, &c. (as Cardinal Perron affirms) but it did not bring down this point of the Messiah's being a temporal prince: then, as Mr. S.* asks us, so the Jew does him; "By what virtue tradition brought down these other points? and whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring down this as well as those?" Then he will ask him further, "Is there not a necessary connexion and relation between a constant cause and its formal effect? So that if its formal effect be points received as delivered ever, the proper cause must be an ever-delivery;" whence he will argue from such an effect to its cause for any particular point, and consequently for this point

* P. 76.

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that is in controversy between Jews and Christians, concerning the Messiah's being a temporal prince, in case it be a point held ever delivered; but most certain it is, it was so held by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and hath been held so ever since to this day.

I shall not trouble the reader with transcribing the rest of this demonstration, only desire him as he reads it over, to imagine instead of Mr. S. a pharisee demonstrating against one of Christ's disciples the infallibility of the oral tradition of the Jews: and I doubt not but he will find this demonstration, and every part of it, (changing only the names) as forcibly concluding Christ not to be the Messiah as it doth infer any point of popery against the protestants.

§. 4. Before I leave this instance of the Jewish tradition, I shall briefly consider what Mr. White† hath offered by way of answer to it; as, First, That the matter of these traditions is nothing else but explications of Scripture framed and invented by their own rabbins. So we say, that the popish traditions are innovations. But then Mr. White and Mr. S. tell us, that they can demonstrate them to be descended from Christ and his apostles, because it is the present persuasion of a multitude of Christians that they are so descended. In like manner, if this demonstration be good, the Jews can prove their traditions to be descended from Moses and the prophets. Secondly, He says, that the "form of these traditions is more ridiculous than the canting of gipsies, or the juggling of hocus-pocus, because it consists in inventing the sense of the Scripture from the mysteries, and numbers, and changes of letters." This is a gross, inex-

† Apol. 123, &c.

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cusable mistake. For though the Jews have such a cabala (called gematry) as this which Mr. White describes; yet that cabala which is argued in this instance, and which our Saviour reproves in the pharisees by the name of tradition, is quite another thing, and among the Jewish writers known by the name of the "unwritten, or oral law;" which they say was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron and Joshua, and the elders, and successively delivered down from one age to another; and at last by Rabbi Jehudah compiled into one volume which they call Mishna, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not consist in the art of numbering, combining, or changing of letters, as Mr. White imagines. But suppose it did so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be; the instance would be so much the more conclusive against them, if what they affirm be true; that oral tradition is infallible, and that the persuasion of a traditionary church in any age, that such a doctrine descended to them from Christ or Moses, be a demonstration that it did so; for if this be sufficient evidence, it is nothing to the purpose what the doctrine be either for matter or form: for if it be once demonstrated to have come from Christ or Moses, it is without any further dispute to be received as of Divine authority. So that Mr. White quite alters the state of the question; which was not, whether the Jewish cabala be absurd and ridiculous, but whether the general persuasion of the Jews in any age, that it descended to them by uninterrupted tradition from Moses, be a demonstration that it did so. If it be, then the Jewish cabala is as demonstratively of Divine authority as the oral doctrine of the papists. Thirdly, He says, "This

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cabala was a doctrine delivered to few, and that with strict charge to keep it from publicity, and so communicate it again successively to a select committee of a few, wherein (says he) you may see as fair an opportunity for juggling and cozenage, as in our case there is an impossibility." This I think is true of the cabala, which it seems Mr. White had only in his view, but is a horrible mistake if he speaks of the oral law which was contained in the Mishna, and which this instance only intends. For of this Maimonides* says expressly, "That in every age, from the time of Moses to Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the Mishna, the oral law was publicly taught: and that after Rabbi Jehudah had compiled it into one volume, the Israelites did generally write out copies of it, and it was every where carefully taught, for fear lest the oral law should by forgetfulness be lost among the Jews." So that, upon account of the publicness of the doctrine, there is as great an impossibility of juggling and cozenage in the case of the Jewish as of the Romish tradition. Besides, was washing of hands and cups, which they also pretended to have come down to them from Moses, and to have been constantly practised in every age, a secret thing? Was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a sensible matter? If therefore no age can conspire to impose upon the next in a plain custom; and if an universal tradition of such a thing cannot come in without such a conspiracy: how could this be the persuasion of any age, that washing of hands, &c. was prescribed by Moses and practised in all ages, if it had not truly been so?

*In Præfat. Sum. Talmud.

§. 5. Secondly, As for instances among Christians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as,

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namely, the various and opposite traditions about the time of Easter, and concerning the baptism of heretics, and the apostolical tradition (as St. Austin calls it) concerning the admission of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controversy, and none of them yet sufficiently answered; I shall, to avoid tediousness, passing by these, insist only upon that of the Chiliasts; which in Justin Martyr's time was the persuasion of all orthodox Christians, that is (in Mr. S.'s dialect) of all the "holders to tradition." For if, notwithstanding the persuasion of that age, that this doctrine was descended to them from the apostles, it was not really so descended; then the persuasion of Christians in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the apostles, is no demonstration that it was so.

§. 6. To this instance Mr. White answers* by telling us, that Eusebius says that this tradition sprang from Papias (a good, but a credulous and simple man), who it seems was mistaken in saying that it was the apostles' doctrine. But for all this Justin Martyr says it was received by all orthodox Christians in his time, as a doctrine descended to them from the apostles. And if Justin said true, nothing can make more against their demonstration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural consequence from these two sayings of Eusebius and Justin, which is this: That the mistake of one simple and credulous man may in an age or two give occasion to the universal entertainment of a doctrine, as descended down to them from Christ and his apostles, when there was no such matter. Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great service by this answer? But

* Apol. p. 78, 79, &c.

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it is according to his manner in all his writings, to say any thing to remove a present objection, though never so much to the prejudice of his main hypothesis; than which, I do not know any quality in a writer which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of sincerity, or of a good cause.

§. 7. And whereas he says, * "That Irenæus's testimony proves it to be no tradition; for he sets down the supposed words of our Saviour, which plainly shews it is a story, not a tradition; a tradition being a sense delivered, not in set words, but settled in the auditors' hearts by hundreds of different expressions explicating the same meaning." When I consider this passage of Mr. White, I confess I cannot compliment him, and say (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue † between them) "I cannot but applaud your discourse, it hath so pleasing and attractive a countenance." And again, ‡ "I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty objection, your arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comely and winning a complexion," &c. I cannot (I say) speak all this of his present argument; but I may deservedly apply to it the last part of his nephew's compliment, That it is an argument so framed, "as if, without any evidence of its consequence, it would persuade men to believe it." But to return an answer to this passage: it seems (according to Mr. White) that Irenæus was mistaken in the very nature of tradition: and if so learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, what can we (to use Mr. S.'s words) § "undertakingly promise to weaker heads?" Mr. S.

* Apol. p. 81.

† Rushworth, dial. 4. sect. 4.

‡ Ib. sect. 5.

§ P. 39.

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instanceth in the Creed and Ten Commandments as the principal traditions which parents teach their children; but now Mr. White can shew plainly that these are no traditions but stories, because "tradition is a sense delivered not in set words," &c. As if Christ and his apostles could deliver no doctrine unless they expressed the same thing a hundred several ways. But suppose they did so (which no man hath any reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by a hundred) can no man deliver this tradition who speaks it in any one of those expressions? If one should employ a servant to carry a message, and (because Mr. White thinks this necessary) should settle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the same thing in a hundred several expressions; and the servant should go and deliver this message in one of those very expressions that his master used to him, and should say these were his master's very words; would not this be well enough?

No; if he had come to such a philosopher as Mr. White, he would soon have given him to understand that he was not fit to bring a message, or to be credited in it, who had so little wit as not to know that a message is a thing not to be delivered in set words. And now I would entreat Mr. White to reconcile himself in this matter to his friends. Mr. Rushworth says,* "It is impossible to put fully and beyond all quarrel, the same sense in divers words:" which, if it be true, I would fain know what certain course Mr. White can prescribe "to explicate the same meaning by hundreds of different expressions," and consequently, how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, by settling

* Dial. 2. sect. 6.

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the sense of it in the auditors' hearts by such variety of expressions. Mr. Cressy * likewise (a zealous asserter of tradition) does affirm, that "the primitive churches were even to excess scrupulous in maintaining the very phrases of traditionary doctrines;" which (according to Mr. White) "plainly shews" these doctrines "to be stories, not traditions, because tradition is a sense delivered not in set words." The same author complains, † "That few among their learnedest masters of controversy, propose the points to be disputed between them and the protestants in the language of the church." By which, I suppose, he does not mean, that these controvertists were to blame in that they did not settle the sense of these points by hundreds of different expressions explicating the same meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the church had, in councils or otherwise (if there be any other way) declared her sense of those points. Again he says, ‡ that "St. Paul, referring to the doctrine settled by oral instruction, to shew the uniformity of it every where, calls it a form of wholesome words." From whence we may conclude, either that St. Paul did not well to call the traditionary doctrine (as Mr. Cressy says he does) "a form of words," or else (which is more probable) that Mr. White is mistaken in saying, that "a tradition is a sense not delivered in set words." Furthermore, the same Mr. Cressy § tells us, that St. Augustine was careful "not only to deliver traditional truths themselves, but the terms also in which those truths were conveyed to his times." But now Mr. White could have informed St. Augustine, that this offi-

* Exomolog. c. 10. sect. 4.

† Ibid. c. 19. sect. 2.

‡ Ibid. c. 27. sect. 2.

§ Ibid. c. 28. sect. 1.

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cious care of his, was not only superfluous, but pernicious to tradition.

§. 8. But to return to Justin's testimony; to which the sum of Mr. White's answer, is—that "Justin esteemed it not a point necessary to salvation, but rather a piece of learning higher than the common; since he both acknowledges other catholics held the contrary, and entitles those of his persuasion, κατὰ πάντα ὀρθογνώμονες, right in all opinions;" that is, wholly of his own mind." It is not material to my purpose, whether or no Justin looked upon this as a point necessary to salvation, so long as it is evident that he looked upon it as a Divine revelation, and part of the Christian doctrine. And yet it seems he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, because he joins it with the doctrine of the resurrection, and says that it was not disowned by any but those who also denied the resurrection. But whereas Mr. White says, that Justin acknowledges other catholics to have held the contrary, I hope to make it evident, from the scope and series of his discourse, that he acknowledges no such thing; but that the plain design of his discourse is to shew, that this doctrine was owned by all true Christians. For when Trypho asks him* whether the Christians did indeed believe that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, &c. he returns him this answer: "I am not such a wretch to speak otherwise than I think. I have told thee before, that myself and many others (as ye all know) are of the mind that this will come to pass. But, that many indeed of those Christians who are *(not)* of the pure and pious persuasion, do not own this, I have intimated to thee." That the negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought to be

* Dial. cum Tryp. p. 306. edit. Lutet. 1615.

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thus inserted, will be clear to any one that considers what follows: for after he had spoken of those who disown this doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther description of them, that though they are called Christians, yet in truth they are not Christians, in these words: "For of those (viz. the disowners of this doctrine) who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical and impious heretics, I have shewed thee that they teach in all points blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd things. But that ye may know that I do not say this for you only, I will, according to my ability, compile all these discourses which have passed between us into one piece; in which I will, by writing, make profession of this very thing which I now declare to you. For I do not choose to follow men, or the doctrines of men, but God, and such doctrines as are from him. And though ye may have conversed with some who are called Christians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who also say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that so soon as they die their souls are received into heaven: do not count these men Christians; no more than a man, that considers things rightly, would own the sadducees, and such-like sects, to be Jews, &c. But I myself, and as many Christians as are thoroughly of the right persuasion, do both know that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be built, adorned, and enlarged," &c. Can any thing be plainer than that Justin endeavours by this discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this point they were speaking of was a Divine doctrine, and owned to be so by all Christians; except such as did only

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bear the name and title of Christians, but were indeed blasphemous heretics and deniers of the resurrection? By which character, that he intends to describe the impious sect of the gnostics will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the negative particle, (which Mr. Mede * proves to have been omitted in the copy) or else acknowledge that those who are "Christians only in name, but, in truth, are impious, blasphemous, and absurd heretics," may properly be said to be of the pure and pious opinion of the Christians. And if only these be the other catholics, whom Mr. White says Justin acknowledges to have held contrary to the millenaries, I am contented he should make his best of them. If Mr. White should blame the inserting of the negative particle *not* into Justin's text, as too great a boldness with the fathers; it were easily answered, that the sense evidently requires it: and in such a case it is no boldness, but such a liberty as the most learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reason (since the exigency of the sense plainly requires the inserting of it) demand of him (what he† unreasonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propositions of Scripture) to demonstrate that the particle *not* was not left out of this clause of Justin by those who transcribed the book. But besides the exigency of the sense in this place, that the negative ought to have been inserted, will appear by the reference which Justin makes in this passage to something foregoing in the same dialogue. "I have (says he) declared to thee before, that myself and

* Nov. edit. p. 664.

† P. 31.

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many others are of the mind that this will come to pass. But that many indeed of those Christians who are *(not)* of the pure and pious persuasion do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For of those who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical and impious heretics, I have shewed thee that they teach in all points blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd things." In these words he plainly refers to some precedent passage which, if it can be found, will be a certain key to open to us the sense of this place. I know that Mr. Mede * (perhaps not observing it) thought that passage to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies of the millenary opinion: but it seems to me to be still extant; for I find towards the beginning of this dialogue, after that Justin had endeavoured to prove at large out of Scripture this glorious coming of Christ, and to refute those who applied the texts produced by him to that purpose to Hezekiah, and to Solomon, whose falling off to idolatry he occasionally mentions; whereupon Trypho objects to him, that many who were called Christians, did also communicate in the idol-feasts: to this I say, I find Justin returning this answer: † First, He denies not that there are such as these "who own themselves Christians, and confess the crucified Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, and yet teach not his doctrines, but the doctrines of seducing spirits." But, says he, "We who are the disciples of the true and pure doctrine of Jesus Christ, are from this very thing the more strengthened in our faith, and become more confirmed in the hope which by him hath been declared to us. For now we see those things visibly and effectually accomplished which

* P. 31.

† P. 253.

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he beforehand told us would be done in his name. For he said, Many shall come in my name," &c. By which *hope* any one that reads the antecedents and consequents, will plainly see that Justin means the hope of the millenium, (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict connexion with the doctrine of the millenium; because (as he tells us afterwards) this doctrine was denied by none but such as also denied the resurrection. And of these men his description runs in these words: πολλοὶ, &c. "Many (saith he) both are and have been, and have come in the name of Jesus, and taught both to speak and do atheistical and blasphemous things; and are by us denominated from those men from whom each of their doctrines and opinions had its rise, (namely, as it follows, Marcionites, Valentinians, &c.) and all these in their several ways teach men to blaspheme the Creator of the universe, and the Christ whose coming was foretold by him, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But we have no communion with them, as knowing them to be atheistical and impious," &c. This passage in hand, when I compare it with the text before quoted, and consider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in these words—"I have declared to thee, I have intimated to thee," &c. If so, the matter in controversy is clear, that the doctrine of the millenium was universal: if it be not the same, I could wish to be shewed some other place in this dialogue where Justin makes any such declaration or intimation. In the mean while, by comparison of these places, it is evident there are but two sorts of men that Justin speaks of,

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First, Who believe the millenium; "We the disciples * of the true and pure doctrine," &c. viz. "myself and many others;" again, "myself and as many Christians as are thoroughly † of the right persuasion." Secondly, Who deny the millenium; "Many Christians," saith Justin: but what Christians? "Of a right persuasion. That (saith he) I have signified before τοὺς γάρ, &c. For I have shewed thee of them who are called Christians, but are, indeed, atheists and impious heretics; that they teach blasphemous, and atheistical, and absurd things:" and true it is, he did shew before, that those who denied the millenium were "many in number, and were called Christians," &c. "but were teachers of blasphemous and atheistical things," &c. "and known to be atheists and impious," &c. But he shewed it of none other besides these: so that if this doctrine were likewise denied by "many Christians of the pure and pious persuasion," then Justin Martyr had foully forgot himself; but if not, then it is plain that the transcribers have wronged Justin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing, by the way, how Mr. White pleases himself with false and frivolous criticisms upon the words πολλοὺς and ὀρθογνώμονες. False they are, as Mr. White shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceding discourse; for which reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as Mr. S. ‡ warily suggests) not to engage himself, nor be hooked by others, out of his own infallible way, but leave it wholly to the § "birdwitted heretics (as Mr. S.

* Τῆς ἀληθοῦς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας.

† Ὀρθογνώμονες.

‡ P. 68.

§ P. 69.

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calls them) to perch upon the specifical natures" of words, as he does of things.

§. 9. Besides these instances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief points of popery, and shew, that for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But because this would engage me in tedious disputes about particular points, I will only single out one of their most fundamental doctrines, viz. that of transubstantiation; concerning which I shall shew, that notwithstanding it is the universal persuasion of the present Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have, any assurance that it was the doctrine of Christ, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I shall not at all contend against the word transubstantiation (which is generally acknowledged to be new), but only the thing signified by it—a substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. And this I might shew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient fathers. But because Mr. White and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Cressy, do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditionary doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publicly held by any catholic who continued afterwards uncensured, and in the communion of the church: therefore I shall content myself at present with one clear testimony, and that of a very eminent person in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom Pope Leo (in an epistle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this testimony, that "in the judgment of the apostolick see he was free from all stain of heresy." The passage I intend is in his Dialogues between a catholic under the name

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of Orthodoxus, and Eranistes, who sustained the person of a heretic. Eranistes,* maintaining that the body of Christ was changed into the substance of the Divinity, he illustrates it by this similitude: "As (says he) the symbols of the Lord's body and blood are one thing before the invocation of the priest; but after the invocation, are changed and do become another thing: so the body of our Lord, after his ascension, is changed into the Divine substance." To which Orthodoxus returns this answer: "Thou art caught in thine own net. Because the mystical symbols after consecration do not pass out of their own nature; for they remain in their former substance, figure, and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before." He does not only in express words deny the substance of the symbols to be changed, but the occasion upon which these words are brought in, and the scope of them (if they be of any force against the heretic's illustration) renders them incapable of any other sense. When Mr. S. hath answered this testimony, I have more for him.

* Dial. 2.

That which I mainly urge against this doctrine is, the monstrous absurdities and contradictions contained in it, together with the necessary consequence of them. Several of the absurdities of it are well brought together by Scotus,* who tells us, That to prove the possibility of Christ's body being contained under the species of bread and wine, many things must be proved which seem to involve a contradiction; as, "1. That one quantum (or extended body) may be together in the very same place with another. 2. That a less quantum may be together in the same place with a greater;" *i. e.* a body of less extension may occupy

* Distinct. 1. 4. dist. 10. qu. 1. n. 3.

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not only the same, but as much room as a body of greater extension does; which is to say no more but this, that a body less than another may be as great as that other even whilst it is less than it. "3. That a greater quantum may be together with every part of a less quantum," *i. e.* a body that is greater than another, may be as little as the least part of that other body which is less than it. "4. That a subject may be without quantity;" *i. e.* there may be a body which hath no kind of magnitude. "5. That a body may be somewhere where it was not before, without changing its place?" *i. e.* a body may be removed to another place whilst it remains still in the same place. "6. That a quantum may be without any quantitative mode;" *i. e.* a body may be extended without any manner of extension. "The possibility of all which," he saith, and I am very much of his mind, "it would be too tedious a work to prove;" and therefore he only attempts to prove the two last, which (in all reason) is work enough for one man. All these seeming contradictions (as he modestly calls them) are by his own acknowledgment involved in this doctrine. To these I might add many more; as, How a thing can be said to be changed into another thing which did exist before: How a body can be present in a place after the manner of a spirit: and yet this they affirm concerning the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament: one might as well say that snow is black, but not after the manner of blackness, but in the way of whiteness, which is to talk nonsense after the manner of sense: How the whole body of Christ can be contained under the least sensible part of the species of bread, as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus † adds, that the whole body is under

† Ibid. q. 1. n. 12.

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every little part in its full proportion; for he says expressly, that "the head and the foot of the body of Christ are as far distant from one another in the sacrament, as they are in heaven:" as if one should say that a body, all whose parts lie within the compass of a small pin's-head, may yet within that little compass have parts two yards distant from one another: and, lastly, How the sensible species of bread, *e. g.* quantity, whiteness, softness, &c. can exist without any subject: to affirm the possibility of which (as generally they do) is to say that there may be quantities of white and soft nothings; for this is the plain English of that assertion, "that sensible species may exist without a subject;" which being stripped of those terms of art (species and subject) that do a little disguise it, it appears to be plain nonsense.

Now the proper and necessary consequence of this doctrine is to take away all certainty, and especially the certainty of sense: for if that which my sight and taste and touch do all assure me to be a little piece of wafer, may notwithstanding this be flesh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then, notwithstanding the greatest assurance tha sense can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what sense reported it to be. If so, then farewell the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of sense: and, which is a worse consequence, if this doctrine be admitted, we can have no sufficient assurance that the Christian doctrine is a Divine revelation. For the assurance of that depending upon the assurance we have of the miracles said to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the assurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of

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our senses; it is very plain, that that doctrine which takes away the certainty of sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of Christian religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a man may be assured that such a doctrine is revealed by God, and consequently true, which, if it be true, a man can have no assurance at all of any Divine revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder that any man who considers the natural consequences of this doctrine can be a papist; unless he have attained to Mr. Cressy's pitch of learning, who, speaking of the difficult arguments wherewith this doctrine was pressed, says* plainly, "I must answer, freely and ingenuously, that I have not learned to answer such arguments, but to despise them." And if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to scorn those objections against it which we cannot solve; then Christian religion hath no advantage above the vilest enthusiasms; and a Turk may maintain Mahomet and his Alcoran (in opposition to Christ and his doctrine) against all that Grotius, or any other hath said, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely say, "I have not learned to answer such arguments, but to despise them."

*Exomol. c. 73. sect. 7.

§. 10. I will add one instance more in another kind, to shew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions, and that shall be the tradition concerning Pope Joan; than which scarce any thing was ever more generally received in the historical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as testifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made use of it to the disadvantage of popery. Since that time not only the papists deny it, but

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several of our own writers cease to believe it. Phil. Burgomensis tells the story thus: "Anno 858. John the Seventh Pope, &c. The tradition is, that this person was a woman," &c. Here is an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "In detestation of whose filthiness, and to perpetuate the memory of her name, the popes, even to this day, going on procession with the people and clergy, when they come to the place of her travail, &c. in token of abomination they turn from it, and go a by-way; and being past that detestable place they return into the way, and finish their procession." Here is one practical tradition. "And for avoiding of the like miscarriages, it was decreed, that no one should thereafter be admitted into St. Peter's chair *priusquam per foratam sedem futuri pontificis genitalia ab ultimo diacono cardinale attrectarentur.*" Here is another with a witness. * Sabellicus relates the same; and moreover says, that this porphyry chair was, in his time, to be seen in the pope's palace. He adds, indeed, that "Platina thinks that this tradition of Pope Joan was not faithfully delivered to posterity. But however (says he), such a tradition there is." Concerning the first practical tradition, Platina says, that he "may not deny it." For the second, he thinks "the chair rather designed for a stool" for another use, &c. He concludes, "These things which I have related are commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obscure authors: therefore I resolved (says he) briefly and nakedly to set them down, lest I should seem too obstinately and pertinaciously to have omitted that which almost all affirm." It is no wonder that he says the authors of this report were "uncertain and obscure," since so very few wrote any thing in

* Ennead. 9. l. 1.

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that age. But suppose none had written of it, so long as he acknowledges it to have been a general oral tradition attested by a solemn and constant practice, it has (according to Mr. S.'s principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred books written in that very age. So that here is an oral and practical tradition, continued, we are sure, for some hundreds of years, preserved and propagated by a solemn practice of the popes, clergy, and people of Rome, in their processions, and by a notorious custom at the election of every pope; and in a matter of so great importance to their religion, (the honour of the see of Rome, and the uninterrupted succession from St. Peter, being so nearly concerned in it) that, had it been false, they had been obliged, under the pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have used all means to have discovered the falsity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound by his own principles either to allow it for a truth, or else to give an account when and how it began; which may possibly be made out by "we metaphysicians," (as he* styles himself, and his scientifical brethren,) but I assure him it is past the skill of† "note-book learning."

* P. 340.

† P. 337.

SECT. X.

§ 1. It is not the present persuasion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath descended to them by oral tradition as the sole rule of it. And this being proved, the supposition upon which his demonstration is built falls to the ground.

The fourth answer to his second demonstration.

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And for the proof of this, I appeal to that * decree of the council of Trent, in which they declare, that, because the "Christian faith and discipline are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, &c. therefore they do receive and honour the books of Scripture, and also traditions, *(pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia)* with equal pious affection and reverence;" which I understand not how those do who set aside the Scripture, and make tradition the sole rule of their faith. And consonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romish church is, that Scripture and tradition make up the rule of faith. So the Roman catechism (set forth by order of the council of Trent) says, † that "the sum of the doctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the word of God, which is distributed into Scripture and tradition." Bellarmine ‡ speaks to the same purpose, "That the Scripture is a rule of faith, not an entire, but partial one. The entire rule is the word of God, which is divided into two partial rules, Scripture and tradition." According to this, the adequate rule of faith is the word of God; which is contained partly in Scripture, and partly in the tradition of the church. And that Scripture is looked upon by them as the principal rule and primary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only supplying the defects of Scripture, as to some doctrines and rites not contained in Scripture, must be evident to any one that hath been conversant in the chief of their controversial divines. Bellarmine, § where he gives the marks of a Divine tradition, speaks to this purpose: That that which they call a

* Decret. primum quartæ Sess.

† In præf.

‡ De Verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 12.

§ De Verbo Dei non scripto. l. 4. c. 9.

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Divine tradition is such a doctrine or rite as is not found in Scripture, but embraced by the whole church; and for that reason believed to have descended from the apostles. And he tells us further,* that the apostles committed all to writing which was commonly and publicly preached; and that all things are in Scripture which men are bound to know and believe explicitly: but then he says, that there were other things which the apostles did not commonly and publicly teach; and these they did not commit to writing, but delivered them only by "word of mouth to the prelates and priests and perfect men of the church." And these are the apostolical traditions he speaks of. Cardinal Perron† says, "That the Scripture is the foundation of the Christian doctrine, either mediately or immediately." And "that the authority of unwritten tradition is founded in general on these sentences of the apostle, ‡ 'Hold the traditions,'" &c. § Again, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, commit to faithful men," &c. And that "the authority of the church to preserve, and especially to declare these, is founded in this proposition, viz. ‖ That the church is 'the pillar and ground of truth.'" So that, according to him, "the primary rule of faith is the Scripture," in which the authority of tradition is founded. Mr. Knott¶ says expressly, "We acknowledge the Holy Scripture to be a most perfect rule, forasmuch as writing can be a rule; we only deny that it excludes either Divine tradition, though it be unwritten, or an external judge to keep, to propose, to interpret it," &c. So that (ac-

* De Verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 11.

† Reply, observat. 3. c. 4.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 15.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

‖ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

¶ Charity Maintained, c. 2. sect. 1.

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cording to him) Scripture is a perfect rule, only it does not exclude unwritten tradition, &c. By which, that he does not understand (as Mr. S. does) a concurrent oral tradition of all the same doctrines which are contained in Scripture, but other doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere: * "We do not distinguish tradition from the written word because tradition is not written by any, or in any book or writing; but because it is not written in the Scripture or Bible:" Bellarmine † also says the same. And as for the "interpreting of Scripture" he tells us, that this is not the office of a rule, but of a judge. ‡ "There is (says he) a great and plain distinction between a judge and a rule. For as in a kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, which are the received laws and customs; which are not fit or able to declare and be judges themselves, but that office must belong to a living judge: so the Holy Scripture is and may be a rule, but cannot be a judge." Here he makes the Scripture as much a rule for matters of faith as the laws of the land are for civil matters. And in his reply to Mr. Chillingworth, he hath a chapter of above one hundred and fifty pages, the title whereof is, "Scripture is not the only rule of faith;" which (had he with Mr. S. believed oral tradition to be the sole rule of faith) had been as absurd as it would be to write a book to prove that Turks are not the only Christians in the world. Mr. Cressy likewise (not very consistently to himself) lays down this conclusion: § "The entire rule of faith is contained not only in Scripture, but likewise in unwritten tradition."

* Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, c. 2. sect. 179.

† De Verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 2.

‡ Charity Maintained, c. 2. sect. 3.

§ Exomol. c. 20.

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§. 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Rushworth's new rule of faith. Therefore Mr. White says,* "They speak ill who teach that some things are known in the church from Scripture, some by tradition." And Dr. Holden (in opposition to those who make Scripture any part of the rule of faith) advances one of the most wild and uncharitable positions that ever I yet met withal, viz.† "That if one should believe all the articles of the catholic faith, &c. for this reason, because he thought they were all expressly revealed in Scripture, or implicitly contained, so as they might be deduced from thence, and would not have believed them, had he not judged that they might be evinced from Scripture; yet this man could be no true catholic, because (as he tells us afterwards ‡) we must receive the Christian doctrine as coming to us by tradition: for only by this means (excluding the Scriptures) Christ hath appointed revealed truths to be received and communicated." In the mean time Cardinal Perron (unless he altered his mind) is in a sad case, who believed the authority of tradition itself for this reason, because it was founded in Scripture.

* Tabul. Suffrag. p. 96.

† Analys. Fid. l. 1. c. 6.

‡ C. 8.

§. 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr. S.'s small party, is fully acknowledged by the traditionists themselves. Dr. Holden says, § That "their divines who resolve faith according to the common opinion, do inevitably fall into that shameful circle," of proving the Divine authority of the Scripture by the church, and the infallibility of the church back again by the Scripture, "because they dare not

§ L. 1. c. 9.

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build their faith upon the natural evidence and certainty of tradition." So that Dr. Holden's way of resolving faith is different from the common opinion of their divines, which he says * "does not differ from the opinion of those who resolve their faith into the private spirits;" and this (according to Mr. White†) is the very way of the Calvinists, and of the absurdest sects. Nay, Mr. White says further,‡ that he will be content to "suffer all the punishment that is due to calumniators, if the Roman divines (he there speaks of) do not hold the same rule of faith with the Calvinists, and all the absurdest sects." So that it seems that the Calvinists, &c. do not in their rule of faith differ from the papists, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. &c. Now the divines he there speaks of, are the censors of doctrines at Rome, according to whose advice his infallible holiness and the cardinals of the Inquisition do usually proceed in censuring of doctrines. Concerning these divines he goes on to expostulate in this manner;§ "Shall we endure these men to sit as censors and judges of faith, who agree with heretics in the very first principle which distinguishes catholics from heretics?" Again,‖ "These are thy gods, O Rome! upon these thou dependest, whilst prating Ignorance triumphs in the Roman college!" And he says the same likewise of the generality of their school-divines, whom he calls sceptics, because they do not own his demonstrative way. Insomuch that he tells us,¶ that "few sound parts are left uninfected with this plague of scepticism;** that this is an universal gangrene;†† that

* L. 1. c. 3.

† Exetas. p. 70.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ib. p. 73.

‖ P. 144.

¶ P. 64.

** P. 149.

†† P. 67, 68.

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there are but few that go the way of demonstration, and these are either wearied out, or else live retiredly, or despair of any remedy of these things." And indeed all along that book he bemoans himself and his traditionary brethren as a desolate and forlorn party, who have truth on their side, but want company and encouragement. So he tells us, * that "the true scientifical divines dare not profess their knowledge, lest they should be exposed by the sophisters of their church to the derision and scorn, either of their judges or of the people."

* P. 101.

§. 4. So that, upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. S.'s demonstration proceeds upon a false supposition, viz. That it is the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith. For there is no such matter; unless Mr. S. mean by *their church* a few private persons, who are looked upon by those who have the chief power in their church as heretical: as we may reasonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome against Mr. White; many of whose books are there condemned, † as "containing things manifestly heretical; erroneous in the faith; rash, scandalous, seditious, and false respectively," &c. And all this done, notwithstanding that the chief subject of those books is the explication and defence of this most catholic principle, That oral tradition is the only rule of faith! To sum up then the whole business: If nothing be to be owned for Christian doctrine (as the traditionists say) but what is the general persuasion of those who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the Roman catholic church; then much less can this principle (That oral tradition is the sole rule of

† Exetas. p. 9.

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faith,) which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Christian doctrine, be received as descended from Christ and his apostles; since it is so far from being the general persuasion of that church at present, that it has been, and still is, generally disowned. But Mr. White has a salvo for this. For although he grants, * that "very many of their schoolmen maintain that tradition is necessary only for some points not clearly expressed in Scripture, whence (he says) it seems to follow that they build not the whole body of their faith upon tradition;" yet he tells us, "there is a vast difference betwixt relying on tradition, and saying or thinking we do so." Suppose there be; yet I hope that men's saying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's surmise to the contrary is that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is in effect to say, that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have that they do not. Besides, how is this rule self-evident to all, even to the rude vulgar, as to its ruling power, (as Mr. S. affirms it is) when the greatest part even of the learned among them think and say that it is not the only rule? But Mr. White endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a † similitude, which is to this sense: As the sceptics, who deny this principle, that contradictions cannot be true at once, yet in their lives and civil actions proceed as if they owned it: so the schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the only rule of their faith, yet, by resolving their faith into the church which owns this principle, they do also in practice own it, though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned papists are just such

* Apol. p. 38.

† Ibid. p. 39.

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catholics as the sceptics are dogmatists; that is, a company of absurd people that confute their principles by their practice. According to this reasoning, I perceive the protestants will prove as good catholics as any; for they do not only think and say that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath passed his word for them: for he assures us * (and we may rely upon a man that writes nothing but demonstration), that "if we look narrowly into the bottom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural method of tradition to have unawares settled our judgments concerning faith; however, when our other concerns awaken design in us, we protest against it, and seem, perhaps, to our unreflecting selves, to embrace and hold to the mere guidance of the letter of Scripture." So that in reality we are as good catholics, and as true holders to tradition, as any papists of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts and in our settled judgment; however, we have taken up a humour to protest against it, and "may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves" to be protestants.

* P. 30, 31.

§. 5. Thus much may suffice to have been spoken to his two great arguments; or, † as he (good man) unfortunately calls them, *demonstrations*; which yet, to say truth, are not properly his, but the author of Rushworth's Dialogues, the main foundation of which book is the substance of these demonstrations. Only before I take leave of them I cannot but reflect upon a passage of Mr. S.'s, ‡ wherein he tells his readers that they are not "obliged to bend their brains to study his book with that severity as they would do an Euclid;" meaning perhaps one of Mr. White's Euclids; for it does not appear, by his way

† P. 173.

‡ P. 163.

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of demonstration, that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true Euclid, I suppose any one that hath tasted his writing, will at the reading of Mr. S.'s unbend his brains without bidding, and smile to see himself so demurely discharged from a study so absurd and ridiculous.

SECT. XI.

Concerning some other advantages of tradition, &c.

§. 1. I SHOULD take into consideration his Ninth Discourse, in which he pretends to "open the incomparable strength of the church's human authority, and the advantages which accrue to it by the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost:" but that there is nothing material in it, which hath not been answered already. Only I desire him to explain, how the supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost can (according to his principles) add to our assurance of the certainty of tradition. Because we can have no greater certainty of the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost, than we have that there is a Holy Ghost; and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. S.) but by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itself can infallibly assure us that there are supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost, then a man must know that tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of

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the assistance of the Holy Ghost upon the certainty of tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the assistance of the Holy Ghost? As if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of tradition, which, unless tradition be first supposed certain, is itself wholly uncertain.

§. 2. The conclusion of this Ninth Discourse is somewhat ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a man he has made himself (with the help of Rushworth's Dialogues), or rather what his party has made him by the office they put upon him; for it seems (by his telling) * Mr. Cressy and the rest are ordained to cajole the fools, "leaving him the way of reason and principles;" and that himself is chosen out to demonstrate to the wise, or "those who judge of things *per altissimas causas*." In the discharge of which glorious office, he declares, that he "intends no confutation of those authors" which Mr. Cressy and others have meddled with: "Yet, if any will be so charitable as to judge he hath solidly confuted them, because he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all their arguments," &c. he shall rejoice and be thankful. That the † intelligent reader (for he writes to none but such) may also rejoice with him, I shall recite the whole passage, for it is thick of demonstration, and as likely as any in his book to have the *altissimas causas* contained in it.

* P. 165, 166.

† P. 159.

§. 3. ‡ "It would require a large volume to unfold particularly how each virtue contributes to shew the unerrable indeficiency

‡ P. 98.

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of tradition, and how the principles of almost each science are concerned in demonstrating its certainty: Arithmetic lends her numbering and multiplying faculty, to scan the vast number of testifiers; Geometry her proportions, to shew a kind of infinite strength of certitude in Christian tradition, above those attestations which breed certainty in human affairs; Logic her skill, to frame and make us see the connexions it has with the principles of our understanding; Nature her laws of motion and action; Morality her first principles, that nothing is done *gratis* by a cognoscitive nature, and that the body of traditionary doctrine is most conformable to practical reason; Historical Prudence clears the impossibility of an undiscernable revolt from points so descended and held so sacred; Politics shew this to be the best way imaginable to convey down such a law as it concerns every man to be skilful in; Metaphysics engages the essences of things, and the very notion of being, which fixes every truth, so establishing the scientifical knowledges which spring from each particular nature by their first causes or reasons exempt from change or motion; Divinity demonstrateth it most worthy God, and most conducive to bring mankind to bliss; lastly, Controversy evidences the total uncertainty of any thing concerning faith, if this can be uncertain, and makes use of all the rest to establish the certainty of this first principle." A very fit conclusion for such demonstrations as went before! It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent readers; for were it not a thousand pities, that so manly, and solid, and convincing a discourse as this should be cast away upon fools?

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SECT. XII.

§. 1. As for his corollaries, supposing them to be rightly deduced from his former discourses, they must of necessity fall with them. For they signify nothing but upon this supposition, that his foregoing discourses are true. And yet this being granted, it were easy to shew that most of them are grossly faulty. For, First, Several of them are plainly coincident. The 2d, viz. "None can with right pretend to be a church, but the followers of tradition," is the very same in sense with the 11th, viz. "No company of men hang together like a body of a Christian commonwealth or church, but that which adheres to tradition." So likewise the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th. The 16th and 17th in the 19th. The 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, in the 21st. And the 32d and 34th in the 31st. Secondly, Divers of them are manifestly absurd, as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the sum of which is, that there is "no arguing against tradition from Scripture, or the authority of the church, or fathers and councils, or from history and testimonial writings, or from contrary tradition, or reason, or any instances whatsoever:" which is as much as to say, if this proposition be true, that tradition is certain, then it cannot by any kind of argument be proved to be false. But is this any peculiar consectary from the truth of this proposition? Doth not the same follow from every proposition, that if it be true it cannot be proved to be false? Yet no man was ever yet so frivolous, as to draw such a consequence from the

Mr. S.'s corollaries considered.

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supposed truth of any proposition. His 23d also is singularly absurd, that "there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition rightly understood, or the living voice of the catholic church, with any show of reason." These are large words. It might have contented a reasonable man to have said, that no good argument could be brought against it: but he is jealous of his hypothesis, and can never think it safe till it be shot-free; nor will that content him, but it must also be impossible for any one to make a show of shooting at it. This were, I confess, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S.'s Discourses above other men's, if they were (as he says) by evidence of demonstration so secured, that not only no substantial argument could be brought against them, but that even the most subtle schoolman of them all should not be able to come near them with so much as a *videtur quod non*. But it may be he means no more by this corollary, than what he said in the 18th, viz. "That no solid argument from reason can be brought against tradition:" if so, then the sense of his 23d corollary must be this—that there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition with any "solid show, or substantial shadow" of reason; which would be a little inconvenient. I will instance but in one more, his 40th, which is this: "The knowledge of tradition's certainty is the first knowledge or principle in controversial divinity;" *i. e.* without which nothing is known or knowable in that science. Which is to infer, that because he hath with much pains proved the certainty of tradition, therefore it is self-evident, *i. e.* needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the present matter in controversy, and that which is the main debate of his book, to be the first prin-

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ciple in controversial divinity; *i. e.* such a proposition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to dispute about it. This is a very prudent course, to make begging the question the first principle in controversy; which, would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind that the method he takes would be the best way to make controversy a science; because he that should have the luck or boldness to beg first, would have it in his power to make what he pleased certain.

§. 2. Were it worth while, I might farther pursue the absurdities of his corollaries. For they are not so terrible as he makes show of, by his telling Dr. Casaubon* that "Sure-footing and its corollaries may put him out of his wits:" which, though intended for an affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and fantastical stuff be apt to disorder a very learned head, then so far Mr. S.'s saying may have truth in it.

* P. 330.

It remains only that I requite his 41st corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural consectaries from the doctrine of his book.

First, No man can certainly understand the meaning of any book whatsoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition. For the arguments whereby he and Mr. Rushworth endeavour to prove it impossible without tradition to attain to the certain sense of Scripture, do equally extend to all other books.

Secondly, The memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preserved by general rumour than by public records. For this is the plain English of that assertion, that oral tradition is a

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better and more secure way of conveyance than writing.

Thirdly, That the generality of papists are no Christians: for if (as he affirms) tradition be the sole rule of faith, and those who disown this rule be *ipso facto* cut off from the root of faith, *i. e.* unchristianed; and if (as I have shewn) the generality of papists do disown this rule; then it is plain that they are no Christians.

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PART IV.

Testimonies concerning the Rule of Faith.

SECT. I.

§. 1. THUS far in the way of reason and principles. The rest is note-book learning, which he tells us * he is not much a friend to; and there is no kindness lost, for it is as little a friend to him and his cause as he can be to it. I shall first examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce express testimonies in behalf of Scripture. In both of which I shall be very brief: in the one, because his testimonies require no long answer; in the other, because it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers, who, for aught appears by his book, is acquainted with none but Father White, as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the course he uses to take with other men's testimonies, because it is the only way that a man in his circumstances can take; otherwise, nothing can be in itself more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer testimonies, by ranking them under so many faulty heads: and having so done, magisterially to require his adversary to vindicate them, by shewing that they do not fall under some of those heads, though he have not said one word against any of them particularly; nay, though he have not so much as recited any one of them; for then the trick would be spoiled, and his ca-

Mr. S.'s testimonies examined.

* P. 337.

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tholic reader, who, perhaps, may believe him in the general, might see reason not to do so if he should descend to particulars, which (as he well observes) would make his * "discourse to look with a contingent face."

* P. 161.

§. 2. I begin with his three authorities from Scripture; which when I consider, I see no reason why he (of all men) should find fault with my Lord Bishop of Down's Dissuasive for being so† thin and slight in Scripture-citations. Nor do I see how he will answer to Mr. Rushworth, for transgressing that prudent rule of his, viz. ‡ That "the catholic should never undertake to convince his adversary out of Scripture," &c. For which he gives this substantial reason, § because "this were to strengthen his opponent in his own ground and principle, viz. That all is to be proved out of Scripture;" which he tells us presently after, is no more fit to convince, than "a beetle is to cut withal;" meaning it perhaps of texts so applied as these which follow: § "This shall be to you a direct way, so that fools cannot err in it." ‖ "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy seed, and from the mouth of thy seed's seed from henceforth forever." ¶ "I will give my law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it." From which texts, if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philosopher's stone, or the longitude, may be proved from the first chapter of Genesis, I am content they should pass for valid

† P. 320.

‡ Dial. 2. sect. 14.

§ Ibid.

§ Isa. xxxv. 8.

‖ Isa. lix. 21.

¶ Jer. xxxi. 33.

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testimonies: though I might require of him (by his own law) before these texts can signify any thing to his purpose, to demonstrate that this is the traditionary sense of these texts, and that it hath been universally in all ages received by the church under that notion; and then to shew, how it comes to pass that so many of the fathers, and of their own commentators, have interpreted them to another sense: and, lastly, to shew how Scripture, which has no certain sense but from tradition, and of the sense whereof tradition cannot assure us unless it be the rule of faith; I say, how Scripture can prove tradition to be the rule of faith, which can prove nothing at all unless tradition be first proved to be the rule of faith. This I take to be as "shameful a circle," as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§. 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils; all which (not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. White's *Tabulæ Suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And, that it might be evident that he had not consulted the books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very same errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that, though he is pleased to say of himself that * he is "a bad transcriber," yet I must do him that right, to assure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

* P. 239.

§. 4. He begins with councils, of which he tells us, he "will only mention three in several ages."

The first, is the first synod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several ages, he should have pro-

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duced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near three hundred years before the Lateran. But there was a good reason why the Lateran should be first produced; viz. because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well, but what says this synod? "We all confess unanimously, and consequently with one heart and mouth, the tenets and sayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, subtracting nothing of those things which are delivered us by them; and we believe as the fathers have believed, we preach as they taught." The force of which testimony Mr. S. lays upon the word *delivered*, as if that word, wherever it is met with in councils or fathers, must needs be understood of oral delivery; whereas, it is a general word indifferently used for conveyance, either by writing or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of testimonies against the heresy of the Monothelites had been read just before this declaration of the synod. Now what signifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this synod declares her faith, in opposition to the heresy of the Monothelites, to be consonant in all things to those testimonies which had been produced out of the fathers?

The next is the council of Sardica; out of an epistle of which council he cites these words: "We have received this doctrine, we have been taught so, we hold this catholic tradition, faith and confession." Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant that this council was re-

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jected by St. Austin, and other orthodox fathers, as * Binnius acknowledges; and, which is more, that the latter part of this epistle (out of which part Mr. S. cites these words) which contains a "confession of faith," is by † Baronius (and after him by Binnius) proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen, yet Baronius thinks that it was the Arian confession, composed by the false synod of Sardica, which sat at the same time; and Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the confession of the orthodox synod of the same name. However that be, he proves out of Athanasius, and from the testimony both of the eastern and western bishops, that the council of Sardica "did not so much as add one word or tittle, no, not so much as explain any thing in the Nicene faith." But Mr. White says nothing of this, and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no speculator in these matters, but only as a testifier delivers down these authorities to us, as he received them by hand from Mr. White; and if the word "tradition" be but in them, they are "demonstrative."

* Concil. tom. 1.

† An. 347.

As for his testimonies from the second council of Nice, (which he calls "the seventh general council,") who pretended their doctrine of image-worship to have descended to them by an "uninterrupted tradition," and proved it most doughtily by texts of Scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodest stories (as is acknowledged by Pope ‡ Adrian the Sixth) of apparitions and women's dreams, &c. for which I refer the reader to the council

‡ Quodlibet 6. cited by Espencæus in 2da Ep. ad Tim. c. 4.

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itself; which is such a mess of fopperies, that if a general council of atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I say, as for his testimonies from this council, I shall refer Mr. S. to that western council under Charles the Great, which, a little after at Frankfort, condemned and also fully confuted the decisions of this council, calling their pretended tradition of image-worship *(putidissimam traditionem)* "a most stinking tradition."

These are his authorities from council; "where (says he) we see general councils relying on the teaching of the fathers, or foregoing church, and on the church's tradition, as their rule," &c. Where does he see any such matter? Or where does he see general councils? Was the council of Lateran a general one? Or was the council of Sardica? If it was, let him shew how the second of Nice could be "the seventh general council." Mr. White must write more explicitly, and say which are general councils, which not, otherwise he will lead his friends into dangerous mistakes.

§. 4. "After ancient councils (not so ancient neither) let us (says he) give a glance at fathers." *Glance* is a modest word, and yet I doubt whether ever the fathers had so much as that from him. Before I speak particularly to his testimonies from the fathers, I shall mind him of what Mr. Rushworth says in general, viz. * "That he who seeks tradition in the fathers, and to evince it by their testimony, takes a hard task upon him," &c. Again, † "As in other points, so even in this of the resolution of faith, as doctors seem to differ now-a-days, so might the

* Dial. 3. sect. 13.

† Ibid.

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fathers also." If this be true, Mr. S. is not very likely, by a few testimonies out of the fathers, to prove that tradition is the sole rule of faith. But let us see what he has done towards it.

He begins with a saying of Pope Celestine to the fathers of the Ephesine council. "Now therefore we must act with a common endeavour to preserve things believed, and retained to this very time by succession from the apostles." Binnius's other reading (of διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς) quite spoils the force of this citation, which Mr. S. puts upon the word *succession*. But read it how he will, why may not the Christian doctrine be said to come by "succession from the apostles," when it is transmitted to us by Scripture, as well as when by oral tradition? I am sure the same Celestine in an epistle to Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by Scripture: "This (says he) is a great triumph of our faith, to demonstrate our opinions so strongly, and to overthrow the contrary, by testimonies from Scripture. And neither in this epistle, nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus: "But what if the apostles had not left us the Scriptures, ought we not to follow the order of tradition?" &c. This makes clearly against him; for it implies, that now the apostles have left us the Scriptures, we ought to follow them. The other passage he cites out of Irenæus, (lib. i. c. 3.) is a clear eviction that he did not consult the book. For he puts two sayings together which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and because Mr. White had cited lib. i. c. 3. for the first saying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an *(et rursus)* "Again," &c. therefore Mr. S. (who

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is of a right traditionary temper, which is to take things easily upon trust himself, and require demonstration from others) concluded that these sayings were in the same place, though in truth they are in several books. As for the testimony itself, there is nothing in it to Mr. S.'s purpose besides the word tradition, which Irenæus does often apply to Scripture as well as oral tradition, and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His testimonies out of Origen will do him less stead: for every one that hath been conversant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by "the church's tradition preserved by order of succession," viz. the mystical interpretations of Scripture, which, he says, were delivered by the apostles to the governors of the church, and, by them, down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends for, Origen is at his service; if it be not, I assure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as also Origen) the papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply in St. Jerome's words, * "As for Tertullian, I have nothing to say of him, but that he is not a man of the church." Whatever he was, these are his words: "If thou beest but a Christian, believe what is [*traditum*] delivered." And here is nothing again but the word "delivered," which, as I have said, is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumstances do not determine it to one; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. S.) to the Scripture. For he disputes here against Marcion, who denied the flesh of Christ, and who, to maintain that, denied his nativity, and† expunged the whole history of it out

* Advers. Helvid.

† His opinor consiliis tot originalia instrumenta

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of the gospel; but, saith Tertullian, "by what authority dost thou this? If thou be a prophet, foretel something; if an apostle, preach publicly; if apostolical, be of the apostle's mind; if no more but a Christian, believe what is delivered." And where delivered, but in those instruments or books of the gospel, out of which, as Tertullian immediately before tells us, Marcion had made bold to expunge this story?

Christi delere Marcion ausus est, ne Caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, &c.

As for his testimonies out of Athanasius, the two first of them prove nothing but that faith comes down from our ancestors, or was by them delivered to us, which nobody denies: nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in opposition to written tradition. The third testimony is out of an epistle to Epictetus, to whom Athanasius, writing concerning those who held Christ's body to be consubstantial with his Divinity, tells him this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general, "the orthodox church was not of that mind, our fathers did not think so." From whence Mr. S. infers that "tradition is held by him a sole sufficient rule of faith, and the only answer to be given why we reject points from faith," &c. But if he had consulted the book, he would not have inferred that this was "the only answer to be given," &c. For it immediately follows, "But lest, from our being wholly silent, these inventors of evil things should take occasion to be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few passages out of Scripture," &c. and from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an error, that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of Scripture against it, to say that it was con-

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trary to the ancient faith; but yet, lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it, therefore he confutes it from particular texts of Scripture. And what, in his opinion, was the sufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have seen at the beginning of this epistle, from these words: "That faith which was professed by the fathers in that council (viz. the Nicene), according to the Scripture, is to me sufficient," &c. It seems that Scripture was to him the rule and standard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

Mr. S. says he will be shorter in the rest, and so will I. For what is to be said to testimonies brought at a venture, when he that brings them, had he read the books themselves, could not have had the face to have brought them? Such is this out of * Clemens Alexandrinus: "As if one of a man becomes a beast, like those infected with Circe's poison; so he hath forfeited his being a man of God, and faithful to our Lord, who spurns against ecclesiastical tradition, and leaps into opinions of human election." Mr. S. knows whose way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midst of a text that sounds something towards his purpose, and leave out the rest, which would make it evident to be meant just contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whose implicit faith, were it not for his culpable ignorance, might excuse him. But for his seducer, Mr. White, how he can acquit himself of so foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous papist to judge, when I have nakedly set the whole passage before him. Clement, speaking of heretics who relinquish the Scripture, or abuse it, by wresting it to their lusts, says, "Men who deal in matters of highest importance, must need commit

* Stromat. l. 7.

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great errors, if they do not take and hold the rule of truth from truth itself. For such men, having once deviated from the right way, do likewise err in most particulars; probably because they have not the faculty of distinguishing truths and falsehoods, perfectly exercised, to choose what ought to be chosen. For if they had this, they would be ruled by the Divine Scriptures. [Therefore, as if any of mankind should become a beast in such sort as those who were *bewitched by Circe; even so he hath lost his being a man of God, and abiding faithful to the Lord, who hath spurned against the tradition of the church, and skipped into the opinions of human sects,†]" not "of human election," as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. White, does most absurdly translate it; "but he that hath returned from his errors, and hearkened to the Scriptures, and conformed his life to the truth, is as it were advanced from a man to a god." At the same rate he goes on for several pages together, taking the Scriptures for an indemonstrable principle, from which all Divine doctrines are to be demonstrated, and for the criterion whereby they are to be tried; and charges the heretics in such words as we cannot find fitter for our adversaries. "As (says he) naughty boys shut out their schoolmaster, so these drive the prophecies out of the church, suspecting that they will chide and admonish them; and they patch together abundance of falsehoods and fictions, that they may seem rationally not to admit the Scriptures." Again, speaking of those heretics affronting the Scripture, he tells us, "they oppose the‡ Divine tradition with human doctrines, by ‖ other traditions [delivered from hand to hand] that they may establish a sect, or

* φαρμαχθεῖσιν.

† Αἱρέσεων.

‡ Θεῖα παραδόσει.

‖ Δι' ἑτέρων παραγγελμάτων.

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heresy." Again he says, "They adulterate the truth, and steal the rule of faith, &c. but for their *oral* frauds, they shall have *written* punishments." But enough of this; whosoever desires to see more of it, let him read on where these men, to their own shame, have directed us, and see whether any protestant can speak more fully and plainly in this controversy. The whole trust of the papists is upon the equivocal sense of the word *tradition*. Which word is commonly used by the fathers to signify to us the Scripture, or Divine tradition, as Clement here calls it; but the papists understand it of their underwritten tradition, and to this they apply all those passages in the fathers, where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the testimonies I have already examined: and there is nothing of argument in those few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word; which I need not shew of every one of them in particular, for whosoever shall read them with this key, will find that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§. 5. As for his citations out of the council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith; I have already shewn that that council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an *&c.* those choking words, in which the council declares itself to "receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the books of Scripture, and unwritten traditions." And, after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at last gives of that council's putting Scripture constantly before tradition, viz. because Scripture, being interpreted by tradition, is of the same autho-

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rity "as if an apostle or an evangelist were present, and, therefore, no wonder they honour Scripture testimony so as to put it before tradition;" which is to say, that because Scripture is subordinate to tradition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if Scripture and tradition be but several ways of conveying the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, why should he imagine an evangelist or apostle to be more present by the Scripture than by oral tradition? especially if it be considered, that he supposes Scripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine.

SECT. II.

§. 1. ALL that now remains, is to confirm the precedent discourse by testimonies of the most eminent persons of the church, in several ages; in which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by that full account which is given of the sense of the ancients in this matter, in the answer to Labyrinthus Cantuariensis; which Mr. S. may, if he please, consult for his further conviction. Testimonies on the behalf of Scripture.

§. 2. I begin with the historical account which Eusebius gives of committing the gospel to writing; which is to this purpose, viz. ‡ "That the Romans were not content with the doctrine preached, unless it were also committed to writing, and therefore did earnestly beg of Mark, Peter's companion, that he would leave them a monument in writing of that doctrine which had been delivered to them by word of mouth. And this was the occasion of the writing of St. Mark's ‡ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 14.

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Gospel. And when Peter did understand that this work was published, (being suggested by the Divine revelation of the Holy Spirit) it is said he was very much pleased with the ready and earnest desire of those persons; and that by his authority he confirmed this writing, to the end that it might be every where read in the church." As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us, * that "of all the disciples, they two only have left monuments in writing; of whom it is also reported, they betook themselves to write being drawn thereto by necessity. Matthew, after he had preached the word of God to the Jews, and was resolved to go to other nations, wrote his Gospel in the language of his country; and thus, by the diligence and pains of writing, did abundantly supply the want of his presence to those whom he left. And when Mark and Luke had published their Gospels, it is reported, that John, (who had always used to preach the word without writing it) being at length wrought upon by the same reason, did betake himself to write." From this account it is clear, that the apostles thought it necessary, for the preservation and secure conveyance of the Christian doctrine, that it should be put into writing; and, that they judged this a better way to supply the want of their presence than oral tradition. Therefore the same author tells us, † that "the disciples, who immediately succeeded the apostles, as they travelled to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard the word of faith, did with great care also deliver to them the writings of the holy evangelists." Again, ‡ that "Ignatius, as he travelled towards Rome, (where he was to suffer) exhorted the churches of every city to hold fast the tradition of

* Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 18.

† Ibid. c. 31.

‡ Ibid. c. 30.

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the apostles; which (as also by writing he testified) for the greater security he held necessary to be copied in writing."

§. 3. That the heretics of old made the same pretences which the papists make now, of oral tradition in opposition to Scripture, the same Eusebius tells us; and withal, that books are a sufficient confutation of this pretence. * "Those (says he) who were of the heresy of Artemon, said that all their forefathers and the apostles themselves had received and taught the same things which they also did; and had preserved the true teaching unto the time of Victor, bishop of Rome, whose successor, Zephyrinus, corrupted it. And this (saith he) would have great probability, were it not first of all contradicted by the Scripture; and next, if there did not remain the writings of other brethren much more ancient than Victor's time, &c. in the books of all whom Christ's divinity is acknowledged." And afterwards he tells us, that these heretics did change and corrupt the Scriptures to bring them to their opinions; so Mr. S. tells us, that the outward letter of Scripture ought to be corrected by tradition and sense written in men's hearts.

* Hist Eccles. l. 5. c. 27.

St. Jerome also tells us, that † "the heretics were wont to say, We are the sons of the wise, who did from the beginning deliver down to us the apostolical doctrine; but he adds, that the true sons of Judah adhere to the Scripture."

† Com. in Isa. c. 19.

§. 4. That Scripture is sufficiently plain in all things necessary.

St. Chrysostom: ‡ "All things in the Divine Scriptures are plain and straight. Whatsoever things are necessary are manifest."

‡ In 2 Thess. c. 2. Hom. 4.

St. Austin, having spoken of the profoundness of

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Scripture, adds, * "Not that those things which are necessary to salvation are so hard to be come at: but (saith he) when one hath there attained faith, without which there is no pious and right living, there are besides many dark and mysterious things," &c. Again, † "The manner of speech in Scripture, how easy is it to all, though few can penetrate to the bottom of it! Those things which it plainly contains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned." How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception against Scripture? And what these things are, which are plainly contained in Scripture, the same father tells us elsewhere in these words: ‡ "Among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, all those things are to be found which comprehend faith and good manners." The same St. Austin, (as also Clement, in the book which Mr. White quoted) for the understanding of obscure texts of Scripture, directs us, not to tradition, but to the plain text, without which he expressly says, ‖ "There would be no way to understand them."

* Epist. 3.

† Ibid.

‡ De Doct. Christ. l. 2. c. 9.

‖ De Unitat. Ecc. l. c. 5.

§. 5. That Scripture is so plain, as to be fit to determine controversies.

Justin surely thought so, when, disputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition on his side, he told him he would bring such proofs (to the contrary) as no man could gainsay: "Attend (says he) to what I shall recite out of the Holy Scriptures, proofs which need not to be explained, but only to be heard." Mr. White might have found likewise much to this purpose in his Clement.

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But not to tire my reader in a point which the ancients abound with, I shall only produce the judgment of Constantine, * in that solemn oration of his to the council of Nice; wherein he bewails their mutual oppositions, especially in Divine things; concerning which they had "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit recorded in writing:" "For (says he) the books of the evangelists and apostles, and the oracles of the old prophets, do evidently teach us what we ought to think of the Divine Majesty. Therefore, laying aside all seditious contention, let us determine the matters in question by testimonies out of the Divine writings." Not a word of any other tradition but Scripture, which was held evident enough in those days, though now Mr. S. tells us it is not sufficient to decide that controversy about the Divinity of Christ.

* Theod. Hist. l. 1. c. 7.

§. 6. Lastly, That Scripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus: † "The method of our salvation we have not known by any other but those men by whom the gospel came to us, which then they preached, but afterwards by the will of God delivered it to us in the Scriptures, to be for the future the foundation and pillar of our faith."

† L. 3. c. 1.

St. Cyprian the church hath ever held a good catholic; yet Mr. S. ‡ takes notice that he erred in a point of faith, and perhaps the rather, because Mr. Rushworth § had told him that he was not theirs in this controversy. "For (says he) St. Cyprian seems to think that the resolution of faith was to be made into Scripture, and not into tradition." But, that we may not seem to accept of this courtesy from him, nor yet wholly to despise it, I shall offer this one testimony instead of many out of that father; who, being opposed with

‡ P. 314.

§ Dial. 3. sect. 13.

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an argument from tradition, demands,* "Whence have you that tradition? Comes it from the authority of the Lord, and of the gospel, or from the epistles of the apostles? For God testifies that we are to do those things which are written, &c. If it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles, then let us observe it as a Divine and holy tradition."

* Epist. 74.

Hilary † commends Constantius the emperor for regulating his faith only according to those things which are written. And to oblige him to deserve this commendation, he adds, "he who refuseth this is antichrist, and who dissembles in it is anathema."

† Ad Constant.

Optatus, ‡ concerning the controversy with the Donatists, asks, "Who shall be judge?" And answers himself, "the Scriptures:" which he illustrates by the similitude of a father who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living, but when he was dying, caused it to be written in lasting tables, to decide all controversies that might happen among them after his death. The passage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

‡ Lib. 5. de Schism. Donat.

Basil, maintaining the doxology as it was used in his days, says, § "Thus we received it from our fathers;" but adds immediately, "This is not enough for us, that it is the tradition of the fathers, for they followed the authority of the Scriptures, making its testimonies the principles upon which they built." He has indeed in the same book ‖ a passage much insisted on by the papists concerning unwritten traditions; but withal, he says those traditions were secretly conveyed, which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. S.

§ De Sp. Sancto, c. 7.

‖ C. 27.

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Chrysostom * having mentioned several heresies, directs how they may be avoided, viz. "By attending to the faith delivered, and looking upon all that disagrees from that as adulterate. For (says he) as those who give rules do not put men upon a curious inquiry after any measures, but bid them keep to the rule given; so it is in opinions. But nobody will attend to the Scriptures; if we did, we should not only not fall into errors ourselves, but also rescue those that are deceived." Again, † "If we should be thoroughly conversant in the Scriptures, we should be instructed both in right opinions and a good life." Again, among the many "sects of Christians ‡ it will be easy to judge of the right, if we believe the Scriptures, because they are plain and true: if any one agree with these he is a Christian; if he contradicts them, he is far from this rule."

* Hom. 8. in Epist. ad Heb. c. 5.

† Hom. 52. in Joh.

‡ Hom. 33. in Act. Apost.

St. Austin calls the Scripture, § the Divine balance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "the Holy Scripture (says he) fixeth the rule of our doctrine." And accordingly himself uses it both in his dispute with Maximinus, to whom he says, ‖ "Neither ought I now to allege the Nicene council, nor thou that of Ariminum: for neither am I bound to the authority of the one, nor thou of the other. Let us both contest with the authorities of Scripture, which are witnesses common to us both:" and also against the Donatists in these words: ¶ "Let them, if they can, demonstrate their church, not by the talk or rumours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not by the councils of their own bishops, not by the books of their disputers, not by

§ De Bapt. cont. Donat. l. 2. c. 6.

‖ Contr. Max. l. 3.

¶ De Unitat. Eccles. c. 16.

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deceitful miracles, &c. but by the prescript of the law, prophets, &c. *i.e.* by all the canonical authorities of the holy books."

* Comment. in Agg. c. 1. Jerome saith, * "Of these things, which, without the authorities and testimonies of the Scripture, men invent of their own heads as from apostolical tradition, they are smitten with the sword of God."

Theophilus Alexander, whom Jerome hath translated, calls Scripture more than once† the rule and the testimonies of it the firm foundations of doctrine. And again saith,

† Paschal. l. 3.

‡ L. 2. ‡ "It comes from a demoniacal spirit that men follow the sophisms of human minds, and think any thing Divine that wants the authority of Scripture."

§ Hæret. Fab. l. 5. Theodoret § charges all heresies upon the not following of Scripture; which he calls "the inflexible rule of truth." Again, "We have learned the rule of opinions from the Divine Scripture."

After the fathers, I shall produce the testimonies of two eminent persons of later times, Gerson and Lyra.

‖ Part 1. Consid. 2. Gerson, in his ‖ book of the Trial of Doctrines, hath this remarkable passage: "In the trial of doctrines, that which is first and principally to be considered, is, whether a doctrine be conformable to the Holy Scripture, &c. the rule of this is, because the Scripture is delivered to us as a sufficient and infallible rule for the government of the whole ecclesiastical body and its members to the end of the world. So that it is such an art, such a rule or exemplar, that any other doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to be renounced as heretical,

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or to be accounted suspicious, or not at all appertaining to religion." Again, * "It is evident how pernicious the rejection of the Holy Scripture is, and how certain a preparatory for the reception of antichrist." Once more, † "What mischief, what danger, what confusion, hath happened through contempt of the Holy Scripture! which sure is sufficient for the government of the church (else Christ must have been an imperfect lawgiver). Let us ask experience," &c.

* De Distinct. Verar. Vision à falsis.

† Serm. in die Circumcis. &c.

Lyra also writes thus: ‡ "As in philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing things to their first and self-evident principles; so in the writings delivered by the holy doctors, truth is discovered, as to matters of faith, by reducing them to the canonical Scriptures."

‡ Prolog. de lib. Bib. &c.

SIR,

You know how easy it were to swell up a large volume with testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr. White does, to hale in quotations, though ever so impertinent: or use the wretched importunity which Mr. S. does to persuade them to be pertinent. But these testimonies which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfy an unpassionate reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own eyes and reason. As for that sort of men which choose to follow noise rather than light, we must be content to leave them to the blind conduct of

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those guides, who having no better means to keep their followers to them, go hallooing in the dark, and fill their ears with the insignificant sounds of *infallibility*, *indefectibility*, *self-evidence*, and *demonstration*.

Concerning the Appendix, wherein you are particularly challenged, I hope for an account very shortly, and so take leave.

SIR,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

THE END.

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